The WRECK of the SEA LION

W·O·STODDARD

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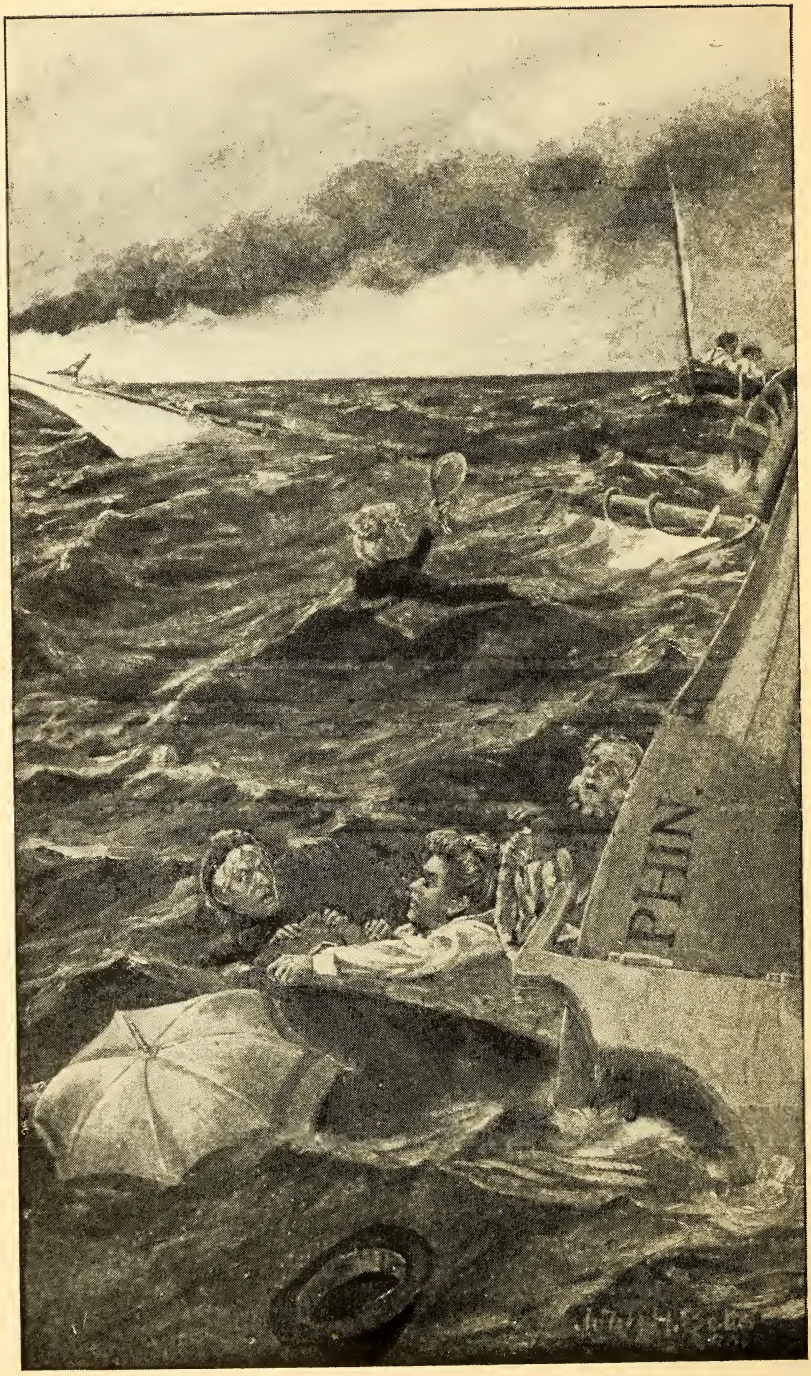
Ralph P. Stoddard
from his father,

Madison, New Jersey,
Christmas, 1913.

William C. Stoddard



"STICK TO YOUR LIFE PRESERVERS"

THE WRECK
OF THE SEA LION

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

Author of "The Young Financier," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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THE WRECK OF THE SEA LION

CHAPTER I.

LET'S GO A-FISHING.

It was a great, snubby nose of the land, pushed out into the salt water by a large pile of rocks which had been heaped upon its back. They were enough to break the back of almost anything, and yet a lot of trees, of all sorts and sizes, had climbed up among them and had rooted themselves wherever there was a good cleft or a patch of ground. They seemed to get a living there, somehow, but nothing else could have done so, unless it might be by catching fish in the deep but not very wide bay on the right, or eels and the like among the oozy channels of the mud-and-watery marsh that extended almost out of sight, eastward, on the left.

Rounded and seamed and bare, blackened by the

storms and sunshine of ever so many hundreds and hundreds of years, was the granite knob at the foot of which the waves came chasing each other in, to tumble heels over head among broken boulders and heaps of seaweed. Every wave that came in looked up and sparkled and laughed, for right on the highest wrinkle of the knob sat a boy who did not seem to have any excuse whatever for being there. On that particular spot not even a scrub oak could have worked out a home of his own.

There was nothing scrubby about the boy, although people without much knowledge of long-shore boys might have called him shabby. Perhaps what artists call the "tone" of his apparel was given by a very wide-brimmed, weather-beaten straw hat, with a bit of heavy fish-line for a ribbon. His check shirt was well enough and his suspenders were still in good condition, as anybody could see, for he wore no coat. The fact that he was barefooted went for nothing, for a pair of stout shoes sat patiently beside him, on the rock, with each a stuffed mouthful of stocking. His trousers were baggy at the knees and turned up at the ankles, but they were whole. He was a very unromantic looking boy, but he was gazing out upon the tossing water with a dreamy, wistful look in his bright gray eyes.

"'Tisn't the ocean," he said; "it's only the Sound,

and away over there's the shore of Long Island. The Atlantic is beyond that, and beyond the Atlantic——"

There he stopped and drew a long breath, as if it were too much for him, to think, all at once, of the wonderful world, and all kinds of world, that might be waiting beyond the salt sea for a boy to get down from a seaside rock and come across and look at them.

"Hullo! Sile! Come down! The tide's turning! We can get out to Foam Island and see the wreck and get some fish, if you start now. Clams, a-comin' home. Crabs, too. Come along!"

It was an earnest appeal, and every word that would stand stretching was drawn out to its full length by a voice that was large for the size of its owner.

"I'm a-coming, Tom," promptly responded the boy on the knob, but he paused to stare down at the foot of the rock and remarked:

"That's high-water mark. It couldn't get any higher unless there was a storm; but I've seen a roller break clean over where I am. I don't want to go a-fishing, nor anything else. I want to go away off somewhere and see something."

Probably there never was a boy, worth two cents, anywhere, who did not at some time find himself

feeling and dreaming somewhat as Silas Moore did, that morning, even if he had no dancing waves to beckon to him and stir him up with hints of where they had been, themselves, before the wind blew them ashore.

As soon as he stood erect he became a pretty tall boy, for fourteen, and his eyes assumed a keen, fun-loving, restless expression, in full accord with his aquiline nose and the healthy tan and freckles belonging to any boy who spends much of his time out on the water. No broad brim will protect a fellow's face from the glare that comes back from the face of the sea.

Tom Clark was another kind of boy, for Sile seemed a head taller but hardly as broad when he stood beside him. Tom was what is called "stocky," with short, black hair, red cheeks, and a rig that might have been traded for Si's, if it would have fitted him.

"Si," said Tom, "you ought to have been at Vrooman's this morning. Father had an express box to deliver, and I went with him to see if they'd open it."

"Did they?" exclaimed Si, with a sudden flush that seemed almost excited.

"Well, they did!" replied Tom. "Mrs. Vrooman and Katie opened it, right away. Wasn't it

heavy, though! And the way it was packed! All the way from Australy and the Sanditch Islands."

"What did the captain send, this time?" asked Si, adding: "Oh, but won't he have a museum!"

Tom seemed to be studying, for a moment, as if the memory of that box were too much for him.

"Kind of club," he said, thoughtfully. "Shark teeth, saw-sword—tear a man to bits. Two big shells. Skull with a handle to it. Katie Vrooman said the crooked sticks were boom'rangs. If you tried to throw them away they'd come back and knock you down. Tell you what, you go and see 'em. They wouldn't let me touch a thing, 'cause the other time I was there I broke that there chiny pot, hefting it, and I know 'twas busted before I put a hand on it. But I did want to try a throw of one of those boom'rangs."

"I'd like to see Australia," muttered Si, with another dream in his eyes. "But I guess Captain Vrooman didn't go to the Sandwich Islands."

"They might eat him up, if he did," interrupted Tom, and he said other things to indicate that his ideas of places and things beyond the sea were dim, if not a little mixed.

They were walking along the beach now, around the curving head of the little bay, toward the dingy pier which, on the easterly side, sat poking its long

wooden finger out as if it were pointing at Long Island. The fact was that it only went out far enough to find three fathoms water at low tide, so that Sound steamers and other craft could land freight and passengers without running aground. That they never had much or many to land might be guessed at from the quiet, sleepy appearance of the village which straggled along from the pier-end and the beach, on both sides of the road that went over the hill. It was not much of a hill, either, and peering above it was the wooden steeple of a church, to indicate that there might be more village out of sight from the water's edge. The two boys were not thinking of anything of that kind. Perhaps they had but one idea between them, for when they reached the pier they both exclaimed at once :

"Yes, sirree ! She'll hold water !"

They seemed to be a little triumphant over something, and even surprised. They said it while they stared at a clumsy looking yawl-boat that nodded at them from its anchorage, a few yards out from shore. A line led from the yawl to a heavy stone, where they were standing, and Si at once began to pull it in, repeating his first remark, but what he really meant was that the boat had now no water in her at all. She could hold out water, and Tom explained himself by adding :

"Oh, but didn't she leak, and wasn't it a job to caulk her! She's a bully good boat, though."

So she might be, but she looked as if there was more of her than two boys would care to pull over rough water. Just now they did not propose to pull, although there were oars, for their next doing was to step a bit of a mast, well forward, and so to turn her into an easily manageable "cat-boat." When the sail went up it was evidently no more than she could safely carry, but as soon as she was off, with the boys in her, anybody along shore could have read upon her stern that she claimed to be the "'Sea Lion,' of Vrooman's Cove." No boat of her tonnage could have asked for more name than that, and as to her crew it was at once manifest that Si Moore was captain and Tom Clark only a common seaman.

The wind was southerly and there was only just enough of it, but out swung the sail, and the "Sea Lion" turned her nose toward the open Sound, with her captain at the helm. The rest of her crew was busying himself about a curious tangle of fishing-lines, hooks, sinkers and bobs, which he had turned out of an old tin cracker box. More precious than all those in his eyes, however, seemed to be a carefully-handled tomato can, concerning which he remarked:

"Lots o' sand-worms, anyhow, but I wish we had some clams and some shedder-crabs. They're the best bait for bass and blackfish."

If every really 'live boy has his dreams about going somewhere and doing something, then it is like getting into one of them and sailing ahead, to be in a good boat, gliding briskly along across a breezy sea, with a fair prospect of sharp bites and flopping fish very soon to come.

Not on the bay at all, and out of sight of it, although near it, there was an altogether different kind of boat, but it would have had to be hunted for. The road from the shore was a dusty, ill-kept affair, like a kind of wide rut, wagon-worn into the side of the upland, and just as it went over the ridge it dipped a little. It did not exactly kick away anything behind it, but all between that line and the water-line was "The Cove," to the minds of all the neighborhood, while the collection of streets and house beyond it, landward, set itself up as Eastwood and believed itself a village of some importance, with a standing in the world and with a seaport of its own. If the people of Eastwood looked down upon the dwellers in the Cove, perhaps it was partly because they were on higher ground.

The first house beyond the ridge toward the village was on the right as the road went over, and it wore

a look as if it knew it ought to be in the Cove, but had timidly crept up from there and had settled in the scrawniest place it could find, so as not to seem presumptuous or to be crowding in among its betters. It was not a small house, by any means, but it had a very old, tired-out look. It even seemed to be made up of at least three pieces or parts of different-sized old houses badly put together, long ago, by somebody who had found them lying around and had hauled them to that place to get them out of the way. The fences and barns, even the land itself, on that side of the road—everything but the larger trees—were in pretty good keeping with the house. Still, it all looked fairly well in summer, and the house itself, not to give offense to anybody, had bashfully gone away back and had fixed itself, at quite a distance from the road, behind a general mess of locust trees, poplars, overgrown lilacs and crooked rows of ancient box that were as jagged and nicked as an old horn-comb.

This was Si Moore's house.

Not directly opposite, but a few rods further on, across the road, there was a neat and pretty gate, in a well-painted picket fence.

All the sidewalk to be seen, worth mentioning, was on that side, and the road went on until it turned

into a street, at the village line, and had sidewalks on both sides.

From that gate a whitey walk of pounded oyster shells led up to a house which at a first glance seemed to be mostly vines that were trying to smother a piazza and to prevent the dormer windows of the upper half-story from looking through them to see what might be going by on the road. The walk went up from the gate to the steps of the piazza well enough, but it split against them, and one-half of it decided to go around the house toward the right, while the other half obstinately pushed around to the left. Both of them, as they went, had to work their way past flourishing crowds of rose-bushes and other bushes, that bordered a broad, shaven sward of grass, almost large enough to call itself a lawn. The ground sloped gently toward the barns, so that the back part of the house was higher than the front. The oyster shells of the walk that turned to the right had been the wiser, for they got all the way around easily to the well-house and to the end of the tan-bark path that led to the barns and the hencoop. The left-hand oyster shells did pretty well, too, at first, so far as the side of the main part of the house was concerned, but just where this walk should have found the back corner, on that side, it ran against a curious-looking,

one-story structure which had evidently been built on afterward, for it was not like the rest at all.

It was neither a ship nor a boat, but it seemed to have thought of being either the one or the other, for it had a mast. Not a mere flagstaff was that mast, but a robust, well-oiled spar of pine. It stood up at least twenty feet above the gable and it upheld what strongly resembled the "maintop" of a sea-going vessel. Down the mast, to the edge of a hatch in the roof, came a trim rope ladder, ready to be climbed, and standing up from the "top" itself there was indeed a flagstaff with its halliards, but just now no flag was flying. No flag. Nothing but the white dress and the all-but-blown-away straw hat of the young girl who was perched in the "top" and was peering seaward through a long, heavy telescope.

If, therefore, the Eastwood people generally were separated from the Cove, and if the shore people could not see the village, there was at least one spot from which the entire horizon could be searched, both land and sea.

The mast-rigged "annex" of the house had a door in its middle and it stood wide open. There was a back door opposite, and that, too, was open; but the oyster-shell walk made no attempt to go through; it walked around at the left and went on

till it met its other half at the tan-bark walk, by the well-house. The "annex" was all one large room, with another door at the right, as you went in, that led into the sitting-room of the main dwelling.

The one room in the mast-rigged house was about twenty feet by fifteen, with its eyes in the top of its head, for instead of windows on the sides it was provided with skylights above, and there was a great deal of shelving around the side-walls. There was neither stove nor fireplace, but a pipe-hole in the wall told of what could be done in winter. In summer there was supposed to be no need for warming, and yet some people might have felt like shivering, if they had remained too long in that room—that is, if they had too strong imaginations or were at all inclined to be nervous.

In the middle of the room lay a boat, a large one, and it was a curiosity how it ever got there, or what for, but then everything else in that room was a kind of curiosity. In the boat sat six sailors, each holding an oar, blade-end straight up, so that it left a little doubt whether or not the oar was holding up the sailor.

Now, if this was Captain Vrooman's own house, and if he had steamed all over the world, he had begun early to pick up something or other, where-

ever he went, and to send or bring it home. No wonder he had to build a place to keep his collection in, but what on earth had possessed him to make it a library as well as a boat-house and a museum?

That was a question that seemed to ask itself, for a sailor could really enjoy finding curious things and sending them home, but how could he enjoy books when he was a thousand miles away from them?

There they were, nevertheless, on shelf after shelf, standing up, if there was room for them, but lying down if they were too tall for the spaces between the shelves. Many had to lie down, for some were books of maps and charts, and others, that were nearly as large, were illustrated books of travels or that told of strange countries and peoples. Others seemed to be histories of various kinds, but there did not seem to be any novels, for nobody would have called a large handsomely-bound copy of "Robinson Crusoe" a "novel." It was only a book of travels, and so were several other volumes written by a man by the name of Kingsley and another named Jules Verne, and so on. These were all on a shelf by themselves, however, not mixed up with the rest, and they may not have been gathered by the sea-captain.

There was plenty of light by which to see all the

things in the room, whether they were queer or not, for the sky-lights wore no curtains and the hatch was open at the top of the steep, ladder-like steps in the corner of the room. It must have been by them and by the rope-ladder above them that Katie Vrooman had climbed to her perch in the "top," leaving the floor of the room below and the boat itself in a much littered condition.

The boat? So far was it from being empty that it might be said to have a cargo as well as a crew—a remarkable crew—and it occupied much more than half of the floor. So Katie Vrooman seemed to occupy more than half of the narrow coop, or rather cup, which was upheld by the one mast of her father's museum. The telescope through which she was peering was one of the long, brass-mounted, shutting-up instruments of the old time, and it had an old look, as if it had seen and known a great deal. She was much younger than the telescope, probably not over fifteen, and she was just saying:

"No, I don't want to see China. Not till I've seen Europe."

Then she changed the direction of her glass and suddenly exclaimed:

"There! If that ain't Silas Moore sitting on the knob. What will that lazy fellow ever be good for?

Mother says he isn't fit for a cabin-boy, and he's always in some scrape or other."

However that might be, she seemed to watch him through her telescope, for she said, "Tom Clark, too," and then she said something about "boat" and "fishing" and "Guess those two won't catch anything much."

After that she pointed the long tube here and there and she soon turned it landward for a glance at the village, before she again tried to find what had become of the "Sea Lion" and the two young fishermen. They had sailed fast and far, but she found them at last, for she exclaimed :

"I do believe they are going to Foam Island and the wreck! I'd like to go there, myself. I can see better now. Si's trolling for bluefish. There comes a big Sound steamer. If there isn't another boat beyond Si's. It's old Squire Lander and Mrs. Lander and Maggie Lander and mother! Why, yes, that's mother! She's always ready for a sail, and so are the Landers, and I didn't know they were going. It's too bad I didn't. Oh, what are they doing! Oh!"

Katie Vrooman screamed and almost dropped her telescope, and it was nearly half a minute before she could look through it again, for she had screamed :

"They're upset! Mother'll be drowned! Oh, mother!"

Her face was very white when she looked again, and her hands trembled so that she could hardly hold her telescope straight, but she searched and searched with it among the waves in the wake of the great, roller-making steamer.

"Where's Si's boat?" she exclaimed. "Why doesn't he help? Did he get upset, too? That's a boat without a sail. I can't look! I can't tell! What shall I do!"

The telescope was shut up sharply and she went down the rope-ladder as if she had been herself a sailor, instead of only a sailor's daughter.

"Mother! Mother!" she whispered, as she hurried out into the road. "What can I do? I can't run all the way! They will all be drowned before anybody can get there!"

She felt as if she could hardly run at all, but she would have gone faster if she had not called to a man in a lumber-wagon and told him the terrible news.

She knew horses could run, and he at once stopped and helped her in, but his team balked viciously the moment he turned and began to whip them.

He was excited, too, and he shouted to some people on the sidewalk:

"Squire Lander hez upsot his boat, aout on the bay, full of women, and they're all a-draowndin'!"

They turned at once toward the Cove, and they told others whom they met or caught up with, but his horses balked obstinately where they stood. Katie waited a full minute, with her heart beating dreadfully, and then she sprang out and ran to catch up with the little procession which was hurrying down the road, while he called after her:

"They'll go in a minute, sis. They don't ever balk long at a time, and they kin run good, too. If I kin only git 'em started, they'll go first-rate."

Everybody took a strong interest in spreading the news, as they went, and every house it came to turned out all the people in it and sent them at their best pace toward the shore. They were thoughtful and tender-hearted about it, too, for both men and women said to each other, cautiously:

"Hush! There's Katie Vrooman! Don't tell her. They say her mother was in the boat. She ought not to know anything about it until they fetch the drownded folks to land."

Katie was going along very rapidly, now she had escaped from the wagon. She felt better, somehow, the moment she could see the Sound. Perhaps it was because it had such a smiling, kindly, old-neighborly face, almost as if it were saying:

"I'm glad to see so many of you from the village to-day. Have you come for a sail? Fine weather for it. Perfectly safe. I never upset a boat in all my life. Come along."

CHAPTER II.

THE WRECK OF THE SEA WINDMILL.

"Tom," said Si, soon after the "Sea Lion" got out into the bay, "isn't there a line ready? I want to try for something."

"Lines enough," replied Tom, fumbling over his tangled heap, "but they've got mixed, somehow. They always do. Take that one and tie a squid on. I'll get out another."

"That's mine, anyhow," said Si; "but you needn't have got 'em tangled up——"

It looked somewhat as if Tom Clark had a genius of his own in that direction, for he was still busy with knots and snarls long after Si was dividing his attention between the sail, the rudder and a something white which now and then showed itself between waves, at the end of the line he was towing astern.

"Tom! Watch the sail!" he suddenly shouted. "I've struck one!"

The tiller of the boat was between his knees now,

and he was pulling in with all his might, for there is really nothing lazy about trolling for bluefish, if there is any luck. If there is not it is very hard work indeed.

"Got him!" exclaimed Tom. "Big one!"

"In he comes!" said Si. "Four-pounder. Good puller, too."

He was all of that, and Tom did not try to conceal his jealousy, while he tugged at his tangle after that first prize of the day was flopping on the bottom of the boat near him. They were born 'longshore boys, and they were perfectly at home in such a boat as the "Sea Lion." So they would have been in almost any other, but some of the people in a boat that was at the same hour nearing them from the westward did not feel at all at home. On the contrary, they felt more than a little uneasy, and they freely said so.

It was a boat fully as large, if not larger, than the "Sea Lion," and it had the kind of white-painted elegance which told that it was a pleasure-boat and not a common fishing craft. Its one sail was white also, and new, and its mast carried a blue streamer with a white star. No oars were visible, and the seats which carried two older women and one younger were cushioned—that is, they were spread with long, lumpy, elastic-looking bulges of

wind, covered tightly with India-rubber cloth, and the one man in the boat evidently took a pride in them, for he was talking about them.

"I'm getting a patent for 'em," he said. "Nothing else was ever made just like 'em. Every craft in the world ought to have 'em on board. Nobody could be drowned with one of them to hold up by. But now, Mrs. Vrooman, just you sit down on this other improvement. I've been blowing it up, full size. It's altogether new, on another patent. New idee!"

He spoke a little drawlingly, but with intense interest in his face and voice, and there was no end of pride in the manner with which he handed Mrs. Vrooman something that may have been a very large, flat, water-going pumpkin, with an India-rubber rind and a curious bit of brass work at one edge.

She was a tall, strong-looking woman, with iron-gray hair and a great deal of weight and dignity. She evidently felt an interest in life-preservers and knew something about them, as she said, looking at the water-pumpkin:

"The captain always has plenty on board his ship. He says cork is best, for it never gets out of wind. This is really a splendid cushion."

It was as if she doubted its being also a splendid

life-preserver, but she removed the chain of rubbery lumps from her seat, arranged the new invention and sat down. That she did so somewhat suddenly and heavily was due to a lurch of the boat, and Squire Lander grasped the tiller to steady things just as their ears were pierced by a shrill, discordant, but tremendous squawk.

"Mercy!" screamed Mrs. Vrooman. "What on earth is that!"

She tried to rise, as she asked that question, in spite of another lurch, but Squire Lander's face was beaming.

"That's part of my invention that you're sitting on," he responded proudly. "Anybody in the water, upheld by one of those imperishable life-preservers, can turn that side-screw and send out a cry of distress that no human voice could utter. Sometimes drowning people cannot call for help, but they could, with my invention."

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman. "I guess I could call out if I was overboard."

"Not if you had salt water in your mouth," replied Squire Lander, positively. "I tried that experiment. It can't be done. There is an absolute need for my invention."

He was a decided man, with a wide mouth that was even firmer in its expression than Mrs. Vroo-

man's. His wife, on the other hand, was a gentle, subdued-looking woman, with hair much grayer than his, and her opinion of him and his genius expressed itself in her surprised way of remarking :

"Why, Sarah Vrooman! What do you know about drowning?"

"Yes, that's so," softly added the younger woman, and it was as if there had been a copy of Mrs. Lander, twenty years younger, without being in any wise too young.

"It only calls out once," said the squire, "and then you have to let on more air, and, of course, it mustn't be wasted. Now I'll show you something else. Greatest marine invention of the age."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman. "If I'd known you were going to try any of your experiments I wouldn't have come. Don't!"

"You will be pleased with this," he replied, and his clean-shaven face had a very obstinate smile on it, as he began to fumble with a lot of stuff in the bottom of the boat.

He was not dressed like a sailor, but rather like —like an inventor, for he wore a high silk hat, not of the latest style, and a swallow-tailed coat, not of any style in particular. His vest was of yellow "Nankeen," and his blue cotton overalls were neatly tucked into rubber boots. No sailor ever dresses

precisely in that way, but it made such a tall, thin man as he something different from other men.

Tom Clark, in the "Sea Lion," was getting his tangle out and one line nearly free for service, when Si remarked:

"Let's tack. Maybe there's a school where I caught that fellow. Hullo! That's old Lander's boat."

"He's got some women with him," replied Tom. Hark! Hear that! Something's a-happening to 'em!"

"One of 'em squalled," said Si, "but that's nothing. It's just like women in a boat to make a fuss. They're sailing right along."

"We'll go pretty near 'em, this tack," said Tom. "But it was the queerest kind of squeal—stuck pig."

Whether or not a pig could have equaled that life-preserving water-pumpkin, Squire Lander himself was proudly remarking:

"Mrs. Vrooman, what do you think now? That call for help was heard in the other boat and it is coming at once to our assistance."

"Humph!" she said. "Nobody but a pair of boys. What could they do?"

"Look, now!" was all the reply he made; and it was as if he had suddenly set up another mast,

a short one, close by him, and as if it spread four curious-looking wings.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman. "What on earth is that?"

"Hush, Sarah," said Mrs. Lander. "It's the windmill that's to turn his new propeller. That was rigged on, behind the boat, before we started. You'll see how it'll work. Look at that!"

"Oh, dear me!" groaned Mrs. Vrooman. "Why, Huldah, won't he tip us over?"

"He knows, I guess," replied his wife, confidently, and Maggie Lander added:

"I wouldn't have missed this for anything. Just see it whirl!"

There was no doubt of it. The sails of that windmill were going around rapidly and so were some cog-wheels and a shaft to which they were geared below. The shaft went out through the stern of the boat, and Squire Lander was gazing over into the wake.

"Huldah!" he shouted. "Maggie! Mrs. Vrooman! It works! The propeller is just buzzing! Hurrah! Steamships 'll never need any more steam, not so long as there's any wind to go by. It beats sails all hollow."

"I declare!" said Mrs. Vrooman, with aroused interest. "I must see it. The 'Wanderer' is a

propeller, and Captain Vrooman says the worst of 'em is the way they eat up coal. If they really could go by wind——"

She was at the side of the inventor, leaning over to look, and Mrs. Lander and Maggie were also leaning and looking, when the squire's face grew dark, then red, and he exclaimed, "Hullo!" He gazed earnestly down for a moment before he spoke again.

"Huldah," said he, "it's a complete success, but the gearing is wrong. That propeller is turning the wrong way. Don't you see? All I've got to do is to reverse it."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Vrooman. "I think I heard something snap. How that windmill is whirling!"

Whirl it did, and the boat was going through the water rapidly, but it was the regular sail that carried it along. There had been obstinacy in that sail, and it had refused to let go or to go the wrong way. Therefore, when the propeller began to pull back against it, there was a tug and strain upon the wooden cog-wheel of the propeller-shaft. It had given up at once and split in two, and the sail, not the windmill, was now turning the propeller.

"Shows the force of wind?" remarked Squire Lander, but his wife said:

"Obadiah, how could you have made such a mistake?" and Maggie explained:

"Why, mother, it would be all right if we were going the other way."

There was something a little mixed and doubtful about that explanation, but at that moment Si Moore's face wore a thoughtful expression.

"One o' the biggest Sound steamers," he said to Tom. "She's almost here. There'll be an awful swell. We'll take it, head on, safe enough, but old Lander 'd better be looking out."

"Guess he had!" replied Tom, sharply. "There! I've got a bite!"

"So have I!" shouted Si.

That was an end of anxiety for anything but the pulling in of those fish, and the "Sea Lion" dashed merrily on, nearer and nearer the Lander boat.

The great steamer was also coming swiftly along, and her pilot saw that the two sail-boats were well out of his pathway. She was a paddle-wheel boat, and her roomy decks were swarming with passengers. Most of them seemed to be summer tourists, and they were taking their ease under the wide awnings. Very little did they care for Squire Lander and his inventions, or for the boys and their bluefish. Only too little, moreover, did the inventor care for the steamer, so deeply interested was he

in the victory the sail-boat had won over the windmill and the propeller.

The steamer was not a danger in merely going by. The peril she was the cause of followed her, in the gigantic ripples of her deeply-cloven wake. How they did roll out, on either side, spreading, with grand, graceful, heaving curves! A boat can rock splendidly over steamer swells if it is headed right, but it will not do to take them sidewise.

"Mr. Lander!" suddenly shouted Mrs. Vrooman. "There it comes!"

"Obadiah!" screamed his wife, and Maggie gasped:

"Oh, father! steer! steer!"

Even the steamer-pilot, in his lofty wheel-house, saw the danger, and his steam-whistle sent out a hoarsely shrill warning. So did the new patent water-pumpkin life-preserver, for Mrs. Vrooman had half-risen, and she sat down again with a heavy thump as the boat careened under her.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Lander. But all three of the women screamed together at the very moment when Si and Tom remarked cheerfully:

"Got 'em both! In with 'em!" not even looking up as the bluefish came over the side.

"The steamer whistled," said Si, the next moment.

"What was that other yell? Where's Lander's boat?"

"Si! They're upset!" shouted Tom. "Watch now, or we'll go, too!"

So they would have done but for good steering, for Si had been on the lookout for that coming swell. So, in a sort of way, had Squire Lander, but his rudder had not behaved well on account of that backward buzzing propeller. Moreover, he had not counted on the windmill, or on what it could do if the wind should strike it right. So all things worked together to help the swell and upset the boat. Over it went, and Mrs. Vrooman's first remark, in the water, was:

"Oh, dear! Huldah Lander, I'll never go a-sailing again with any kind of invention."

"Oh, those boys!" faintly responded Mrs. Lander; "they're sailing away!"

"Wife," sputtered the inventor, "did you stick to your life-preservers? Maggie wore one of hers. So did I—two of 'em. I'll show you how to use them. Fine opportunity!"

Mrs. Vrooman must have been thinking aloud. She had seized the huge, flat, squawking bulb that she had been sitting on, with one hand, as she went over, and one of the long, bulby cushions, so that she went into the water well provided. She also knew

how to swim, and she had plenty of courage, for she remarked, coolly enough :

"Sam Vrooman would be ashamed of me if I were flustered in a shipwreck. Those stupid boys! Why don't they come?"

She could see them, from the top of a swell that lifted her, and they did not seem to be coming. The inventor's wife and daughter, down in the wave-hollow below the sailor's wife, were not by any means so calm and collected. Both of them were proving that a woman in the water does not always need a patent India-rubber squall.

"Huldah," sputtered the husband, floundering near her, "put this under your chin. That's it. One under each arm. You can't sink. They'd hold you up for a week. Margaret? Oh, yours is under your chin. That's it. Hug the others tightly. Be a brave girl, now. You are entirely safe, and the water is not cold."

"Oh, but my new dress and my hat!" she exclaimed. "And I've lost my parasol!"

His tall silk hat was gone and he had bravely kicked off his rubber boots, but for all his losses he was full of enthusiasm over the capital test he had made of his inventions. If he was exhibiting to good advantage, however, so were the two boys.

'Long-shore boys could hardly be expected to be

nervous about water. They knew Squire Lander could handle a boat, and they had had no thought of his actually upsetting until he went over. Even an upset, moreover, had nothing in it very terrible for fellows who had been tipped over regularly every summer since they could remember.

They were now acting promptly, nevertheless, but the first order given by the captain of the "Sea Lion" to his crew had been:

"Tom! Down with the sail! We must row to them! Quick!"

"Of course," said Tom. "We'd sail right past 'em. Down she goes!"

"Mrs. Vrooman is nearest," thought Si. "She mustn't tip us over, though——"

"Si, why don't you come?" he heard her call out, just then, and he responded:

"Coming, Mrs. Vrooman! Here we are. Now! steady the boat, Tom. Can you climb in, Mrs. Vrooman?"

There had been some headway on the boat when the sail went down, and he was now sculling vigorously.

"Why, you move pretty quick," she said, as she caught hold of the gunwale.

"Steady, Si! I can help myself. In I come! I'm a sailor's wife! There!"

"Who would ha' thought she could ha' done it?" exclaimed Tom, as the dripping woman pitched her life-preservers forward, but she did not reply to him. She said:

"Why, he has steered for Huldah Lander! Catch my hand, Huldah——"

"O—oh!" screamed Mrs. Lander. "Pull me i-in! Save Maggie!"

"She's safe!" shouted her father. "I've fetched her another life-preserver."

He knew what he was about, at least, and it was marvelous how soon he was able to climb in, himself, after Margaret, and congratulate his whole water-soaked quartet upon the success of his inventions.

"What about your boat?" asked Si, as he again raised the sail of the "Sea Lion."

"She's all right. She can't sink," said Squire Lander, cheerfully. "I made a lifeboat of her with some of my new patent air-boxes. We'll hitch her on and tow her in soon's we've gathered the things. They'll all float."

"I don't care, Si," said Mrs. Vrooman, very much as if she were scolding him. "We all owe our lives to you and Tom, anyhow. Bless you!"

Si looked dreadfully cut up about it, somehow, and blushed without speaking, but Tom remarked:

"Guess you do, Mrs. Vrooman. I couldn't ha' done a thing. Si handled the boat, and them windbags of Squire Lander's ain't of much account, nohow."

Squire Lander was even then caressing the flat pumpkin, and was beginning to explain its superiority to anything else, and the "Sea Lion" was headed homeward, but none of its crew or passengers knew of the telescope watch in the Vrooman "top."

They knew nothing, therefore, of the commotion on the shore of the Cove.

Quite a number of excited people reached the shore before Katie Vrooman arrived, and more than one boat was ready to push off. One man was just whispering:

"Don't let her know! Can any of you say whereabouts it was?"

It was into that man's boat that Katie instantly sprang, exclaiming:

"Mr. Moore, I saw them through father's glass. It was in a bee-line from our house to Oyster Point."

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "Now we can steer straight. Who was there?"

"Squire Lander, Mrs. Lander, Maggie Lander and—and my mother! Oh, do pull!" replied Katie; but four good rowers were already at the thwarts, and in another instant flashing oar-blades were bend-

ing with the force of the strokes that sent their very good little craft to the rescue.

Boat after boat followed fast, and among them were two stout yachts and a heavy-looking oyster dredger.

More people gathered on the shore, and scores walked out upon the old pier. Evidently the news had spread rapidly, and it was not a common thing for the dwellers at and about Vrooman's Cove to have a sudden and first-class excitement, in midsummer, with such fine weather, too, and with twice as many as usual of city people there for their health.

"Oh, how slowly we go!" murmured Katie, straining her eyes forward. "No, there isn't a sail to be seen! They'll all be drowned before we can get there! Yes, there's a sail up. Somebody is in that boat——"

She could have seen better, before that, if she had not been crying, but now it was of no use to look, for the very sail itself hid from view whoever was behind it in that boat, so far away from her.

"Oh, mother!" she cried.

CHAPTER III.

SI'S ESCAPE.

SIX persons, four of them heavy with sea-watery clothing, made a pretty good load for the "Sea Lion," but it was the drag of towing the Lander boat, after it was righted, that made them sail homeward so slowly.

"Tell you what, Si," remarked Tom, "this knocks our going to Foam Island and the wreck to-day. I'm glad we took some fish, first, anyhow."

"You were just in time to rescue us," said Mrs. Vrooman, sharply. "You ought to be satisfied with four such big fish."

"Only three," responded Tom, staring at the finny fellows in the bottom of the boat. "The biggest of 'em won't weigh more'n four pounds."

"Four pounds," she exclaimed. "Why, I weigh over a hundred and sixty——"

"Oh!" said Tom, kicking over a blue-fish, "but then we didn't exactly come out after you."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Vrooman, suddenly turning her face homeward. "I wish we were all safe ashore."

No doubt the steamer's people had seen the picking up, for she had only slowed her engines for a moment and had then gone on, sending back a few hoarse whistles of encouragement. Or it may have been to reprove Squire Lander for upsetting.

Poor Katie, in Mr. Moore's boat, was enduring yet another trial.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "Those yachts are ever so far ahead of us. They'll all get there before we do."

"Any sail-boat can beat a row-boat," replied Mr. Moore, calmly. "I've considered that. It's the best thing for them."

He was a very intelligent looking man, somewhat as if he had been Si himself, a number of sizes larger and much more carefully dressed. There was thought and consideration in everything he said or did.

He was now pulling with much slower and steadier strokes, and the three other rowers were keeping time with him, as if their first burst of energy were expended.

They really could not have gained anything by over-exertion, but the yachts and the oyster dredger

were manifestly racing it, with the biggest yacht well ahead and likely to win. She carried a full load of passengers, too, for a stream of women from the pier had poured into her until they were cut off by her starting. They were in a high state of excitement, and seemed to be almost proud of being out there as a life-saving expedition.

"I'll give them an example of my cry of distress," remarked Squire Lander, as the victor in the yacht-race drew nearer; but Si was whispering to Tom:

"We can hitch Lander's drag to her, and then we can cut it for Foam Island. The wind's going to be fine."

"That's so," replied Tom, "but you mustn't let 'em see you hitch her on."

The face of Mr. Moore was very thoughtful indeed, and his regular strokes had less and less of haste in them, for he was thinking, considerately:

"If Mrs. Vrooman is really drowned, I don't exactly know how we'd better break it to Katie."

"Oh, do hurry, Mr. Moore!" she exclaimed. "Isn't that boat, away out there, the one Si goes in?"

"I should say it was," he replied, quietly. "There wasn't any other out from the Cove, that I know of, besides that and Lander's. All the rest are here."

It looked like it, and there was quite a fleet of them, the sailing craft well in the advance and the rowboats tugging along behind them.

"I do hope it's Si's boat," thought Katie, again and again, as from the crest of every wave she caught glimpses of the white sail of the "Sea Lion." "Oh, mother! What if it wasn't there soon enough!"

She had every reason for feeling dreadfully, and it was even harder to be hopeful when more of the other rowboats pulled past her. It was of no use whatever to be in the first boat that set out from the shore. She would have given a great deal for a telescope, especially at the moment when she saw the winner of the yacht-race actually meet the "Sea Lion," but Mr. Moore exclaimed:

"Hear that, boys? Hear it, Katie? They're cheering! They wouldn't hurrah if anybody'd been drowned!"

"Oh, but I want to see mother!" said Katie. Now, however, she could cry very comfortably and even laugh a little, for she heard them cheering again. It was really a pity that she could not hear other things besides the cheering.

"I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman, as the yacht neared them. "Those are all Mrs. Henderson's city boarders, and Mrs. Lamb's, too."

"Oh, dear!" said Maggie. "How vexatious. To have them see us looking so!"

"I don't care how I look," responded Mrs. Vrooman, stiffly. "But I never want to go to sea again with a windmill."

Loud and clear and full of drowning misery, rang out that moment the yell for help, uttered by the water-pumpkin Squire Lander was working.

One woman on the yacht actually screamed, and another remarked:

"If she was drowned she couldn't call out in that fashion."

The squire, however, sat at the prow of the "Sea Lion" swinging his pumpkin because he had no hat to swing and shouting:

"Perfectly safe! The life-preservers were a complete success! We could have floated all day!"

It was then that the enthusiastic cheering began, and both boats lowered their sails and clung together while the rescued party were transferred to the yacht for safety and for a swift run to the Cove. Of course, all interest and attention was centered upon them, with much anxious doubt as to what was the real thing to do for three drowned women. The two boys were therefore almost overlooked for a moment, and they were particularly glad of it.

"Now's our time, Tom," said Si. "Hold her steady. I'll change the hitch to that hook on her stern."

"Go it," whispered Tom. "None of 'em are looking. Oh, but won't they be mad when they find it out!"

"She can tow it better'n we can," said Si, and in an instant it was done, while Squire Lander was giving a general explanation of the operations of his inventions, and while Mrs. Vrooman was resisting the efforts of the ladies to do something for her restoration.

The other yacht and the oyster dredger came sweeping nearer, and there was more cheering. Everybody was feeling fine. Even Maggie Lander felt almost paid for her wet apparel, since it brought her such boat-loads of sympathy and attention.

Si's face looked red and guilty, nevertheless, when Mrs. Vrooman came to the side of the yacht and said to him:

"Silas, I want to see you as soon as I can, after we get ashore. Tom, too. You must come to the house. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Si, very much as if she had threatened him; but Tom sat as still as if he were hiding away and letting Si catch it for both of them.

Somebody pulled Mrs. Vrooman's arm and spoke to her at that moment.

"Now, Si?" asked Tom. "Ready?"

"All ready!" commanded the skipper of the "Sea Lion," as he cast her loose from the yacht and stepped to the tiller.

Tom was pulling on the halliards; up went the sail; away swung the boat; and Squire Lander suddenly remarked:

"There they go! Yes, they didn't carry off any of the life-preservers. They're real good fellows. They got there just at the right time. Hullo! Hullo! Why, we are towing my boat!"

The breeze was fresh and the "Sea Lion" was running swiftly before it.

"This is bully!" shouted Tom. "Why, Si, at this rate we can get to Foam Island and rummage the wreck and have the best kind of a time."

"I guess they were glad we were on hand, too," said Si. "I don't care what old Lander says, they didn't want to bob around on his life-preservers. Oh, but ain't I glad we got rid of his boat, and the windmill, and all that!"

The men on the yacht and the women did not feel so happy about it when they found their swift racer almost sitting still on the water, but perhaps the most discontented person of all was Katie Vrooman.

She saw all of the sailors and some of the rowboats "get there first," and Mr. Moore only replied to her, placidly :

"Why, it's all right, child. I saw your mother h'isted on to the yacht. She isn't drowned, she's only soppin' wet. We'll get there soon enough."

Perhaps she did, but when she was actually near enough to see her mother and say something, Mrs. Vrooman's first response was :

"Saw me drown through the telescope? How scared you must have been! I'm real sorry! It was old Squire Lander's whirligig that did it. I'll never sail with him again as long as I live!"

Katie hardly knew what to say. At least, she did not say anything until she had actually climbed from Mr. Moore's boat into the yacht. After that she did not care whether the sailing was fast or slow, and the discontent was left in the care of the crew and passengers, who argued with Squire Lander as to what was best to do with "the drag."

On went the "Sea Lion," and now, for the first time, Si and Tom began to realize a little what a big thing it was to have saved the lives of four persons "in spite of those there wind-bags of old Squire Lander's, and his jimcrack windmill."

They were discussing the manner in which the women behaved themselves in the water, and were

freely giving the first prize for pluck to Mrs. Vrooman, when suddenly Tom stood erect, staring at something in the bottom of the boat, and shouting:

"Hullo! Oh, Si!"

"Whoop!" responded Si. "If that isn't a spurt! Why, Tom, that's one of your caulkings. It's come out——"

"Wors'n it ever was," groaned Tom.

"Put your thumb on it," exclaimed the captain. "I'll steer for home! We'll need life-preservers before we get there!"

"Look at it!" said Tom, as he at once crouched and did his best to choke off the little stream of water that was pouring into the boat.

All thoughts of fishing or of Foam Island were drowned at once, and they were glad the wind had freshened. It was not unfavorable, either, and the "Sea Lion" leaned over, almost gunwale under, as her head was pointed for the Cove.

"She can race it," said Si, "but the water's coming in fast. Anyhow I can steer and bale at the same time."

It was as well that he could, for Tom's thumb was a failure, and the leak was gaining pretty fast. Si was holding the rudder with one hand and working an old tin pan with the other, while Tom was doing his best with the little tin pail which had con-

tained, when they set out, the provisions for the intended voyage of the "Sea Lion."

There was something vicious and very ugly about that leak. It may have known where the others were, which the boys had caulked so industriously, in order to get the use of the "Sea Lion" from her owner, and so it had set them, too, a-going.

"He told us we couldn't do it," said Tom, "and now we've got to do it all over again. We didn't pound the oakum in hard enough. More of it's coming out. More leaks!"

These were following the example set them by the first leak, perhaps, because they were near neighbors and as much alike as so many brothers.

"Bale!" shouted Si. "She's a ripper to go. Bale away!"

There was nothing dreamy about him now. Indeed, from the moment when Squire Lander's boat went over he had seemed like another boy. That is, he had appeared well so long as he was doing something and nobody spoke to him, but he had evidently been very much afraid of Mrs. Vrooman. Even when she had praised him, after her own fashion, he had kept back close against the stern, where he was sitting, and he had drawn a long breath when he saw her safely transferred to the yacht. Perhaps he believed that there would be

more room for her there, and more room for him in the "Sea Lion." Tom had not seemed to care so much, but then he was only a seaman, not a skipper, and his house at home was down in the Cove, instead of being, like Si's, in the edge of the village of Eastwood, right across the street from the Vrooman place. He had not been accustomed to frequent meetings with Mrs. Vrooman, and Si had had that privilege, ever since he could remember.

The "Sea Lion" seemed to be aware that something was going wrong, or else it made her sick to have so much sea water in her, for she was now not running nearly so fast. To be sure, she was already in Vrooman's Cove, a long distance in advance of the slowly-dragging yacht which contained the Lander party.

The people on the pier and along the shore were saying hard things about that craft, especially since all the other boats of the rescue fleet had decided to keep her company and come in with her. Not one of them was willing to give up its share in so remarkable a rescue, while all those who had no boat to go out in declared that they were dying to hear the news.

They were not, indeed, for they took a lively interest in the "Sea Lion" the moment they could see how desperately the boys were bailing.

"That's the other boat that was wrecked," remarked a city lady, wisely. "Don't you see? they had a collision with that steamer."

"And she went right along as if nothing had hurt her," gravely added one of the Cove fishermen, hitching up his trousers and winking wickedly at another fellow.

"Bale! Si!" exclaimed Tom. "We're almost in, but she's awful loggy!"

So she was, and the box of fishing tackle was floating around on a cruise of its own, and the look of things would have been very bad if the "Sea Lion" had been further at sea.

"Hurrah!" shouted Si, as he heard the keel under him grate against the shore gravel. "Here we are! Tom, I'm going to put for Vrooman's to tell 'em there's nobody drowned."

That was thoughtful, although it left Tom to take care of the "Sea Lion" and all she had brought in. But then he had the prize privilege of telling the news in several ways of his own to the eager listeners, who came flocking fast toward the spot where the all-but-sinking yawl came ashore.

"I guess I'd go and tell our folks, too," remarked Si, starting up the road as if he were in a hurry—"if mother wasn't visiting over beyond the village.

She never worries about anything, anyhow, and she doesn't know that I was there."

Another change was coming over him as he walked, and he looked more as he had looked when he sat on the granite knob, that morning, and stared so dreamily across the Sound. He was not exactly limp, but before he went over the ridge he wore the air of a fellow who had nothing particular to do. Perhaps part of the secret came out as he was going through the Vrooman gate, for he remarked, aloud :

"What if there shouldn't be anybody at home, after all? I'll go in and see."

He turned toward the left, with the oyster shells that walked toward the museum.

"Door's open," he said. "I'll go right in."

He did not knock, but he drew a long breath as if something awed him.

"That's Captain Vrooman's boat," he whispered to himself, "but I dare not touch a thing in it. I'll see if there's anybody in the house."

The sitting-room door was still open, but nobody answered the more and more vigorous rapping which he gave it, and he turned again into the museum.

"It's just wonderful!" was what his lips and eyes remarked, together, as he looked around him,

and then he said aloud, to himself: "Glad the captain won't have to come home and find his wife drowned. He's seen all sorts of drowning. Just look at that boat and those men! No wonder they don't care to have folks come snooping around here. Don't they look tough! Hullo! that's his glass. I'll go up and see if they're coming. I've always wanted to climb to that roost."

He caught up the telescope, in its case, from where Katie had dropped it, and in a moment more he was on the roof, at the foot of the rope-ladder.

"Wonder what Mrs. Vrooman would say!" he thought, hesitating, and then he exclaimed aloud: "Guess it's the only chance I'll ever have. She won't care."

Up he went, out came the telescope, and the swift glance he took with it, all around the horizon, ended with a steady stare at something in the Cove.

"There they are!" he exclaimed. "Just got to the pier. How she must have dragged! Ain't they making a fuss, though? There's father. They're pulling old Lander's boat ashore. He's just the queerest kind of crackling. Always got some new bee in his head. But this is the nicest place I was ever in. You can see all there is to see."

There was a great deal in that, no doubt, but the

enthusiastic people on the pier in Vrooman's Cove had not the slightest idea that they were being stared at by anybody but themselves. They were, indeed, for the greater part, staring only at the members of the upset boating-party, and Mr. Moore may have been more than half right when he remarked:

"Tell you what, if the Cove wanted to be chuck full of folks from the city it had better contract to have a boat-load of women tipped over every afternoon at two o'clock. This here come too early in the day, and they won't know what to do after dinner."

"Tom," said Katie Vrooman, as he met her on the pier, "what's become of Si? Mother wants to thank him and so do I. Both of you. Where is he?"

"Why," replied Tom, thoughtfully, "I kind o' guess that was what he was afraid of. He streaked it for home soon's we came ashore. Didn't even stop to get his fish-lines, and I've got to take care of them and the bait myself."

"I thought you and he were going a-fishing," she said.

"So we were," he responded; "but we hadn't more'n got away before all our caulkin' began to come out. We leaked awful! Came near sinkin'. He said he'd let your house know."

"Why, Katie," exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman, "there's nobody there. Let's go home."

"Here's a carriage waiting for you, madam," interrupted a polite gentleman near her. We are all so glad you were rescued. Brave boys, too——"

"Why, sir," she replied, "so they were, but I do believe he ran away for fear of being thanked for it. He did it splendidly."

She meant the saving and not the running away, but she evidently agreed with Tom himself that the good work of the "Sea Lion," and most of the praise for it, belonged to its captain rather than to its crew. The captain himself, perched in the maintop of Captain Vrooman's museum was at that moment remarking:

"Oh, but ain't I glad I came away? There she is. There's Katie. And old Lander's showing 'em all how to put on his life-preservers and squawk 'em."

CHAPTER IV.

BOAT-HOUSE AND SHOP.

"I NEVER looked through so good a glass before," remarked Si, as he sat in Captain Vrooman's look-out. "It brings them close on you. You can see what they're doing, but you can't hear 'em."

Then he lowered the glass and carefully shut it up as he added:

"Now, I guess I'll get down before Mrs. Vrooman gets home. Glad she wasn't drowned, but she doesn't like me."

If that was his conviction it may have made him hurry his descent a little, and he looked again in the sitting-room, but nobody was there. The boat-house seemed his best place to wait in, and he stood at the prow of the boat for a moment, but its crew paid him no manner of attention. There they sat, three on each side. They were evidently sailors, from their rig, but they were not every-day sailors, such as came and went about the Cove and along

shore. Si stared at them intently, and then he remarked :

"I guess I'll get Captain Vrooman to keep his word and spin me his yarn about this boat and the men. They're just awful. He always gets home pretty soon after his boxes of curiosities begin to come. Those fellows are almost as natural as life, but they're pretty dusty just now."

He turned square around from the boat, for near him, wide open on a broad, lower shelf lay a large book that showed a striking picture on one page and print on the other.

"It's the big 'Robinson Crusoe' he got in England," said Si, but his first interest was in the strange paper-weight that kept the book open, and he said : "It isn't so very big a skull, but isn't it ugly ! How it grins ! The captain says some of those tribes take a pride in gathering 'em. He bought a lot, too. I've seen that picture. Crusoe and Friday watching the cannibals dance around a fire. Captain Vrooman has been among the cannibals. He had some of them for sailors. I'm going to get him to tell me about them, and about those fellows in the boat."

He was not afraid of the skull paper-weight, for he moved it and turned the pages to look at other pictures. He even read a little, but he evidently

knew "Robinson Crusoe" pretty well. There was a stronger fascination in looking around the room, at shells and bows and savage weapons. A dried crocodile on one of the shelves looked down at him ferociously, as if asking what he was doing there, but the men in the boat paid him no manner of attention. They seemed rather to be looking at things at a distance. Many minutes went by, but if Si was waiting for Mrs. Vrooman he did so with an idea of about how long it would take a very wet woman to walk from the pier to the house. The carriage and horses ruined that calculation, and his next experience was a surprise, for a voice at his elbow exclaimed :

"Si ! Are you here ? Mother wants you."

"Oh !" responded Si, turning quickly. "There ! I tipped that skull over."

"Mother has gone upstairs, but she's coming right down. The Landers went home. Oh, Si, what a narrow escape it was !"

"Narrowest kind," said Si. "I never saw a boat leak full so fast as she did ! But we got ashore. If she'd have sunk, Tom and I can swim."

She had not spoken of his risk or Tom's in the first place, but she replied :

"So can mother, but she didn't have any chance. She was all loaded up with life-preservers, and if

you hadn't been there!—Oh, Si, I am so glad you were there!"

"So am I," he began, but she whirled around and shot away into the house, for a voice was calling: "Katie!"

"That's Mrs. Vrooman," said Si. "I—I guess she must be awful wet. I—I'll go home. I'll see her some other time. I don't care much what she says."

Even the museum and the boat seemed to have lost their attraction for him. Out he went, stepping lightly, and a look of escape and freedom came into his face the moment he was safely beyond the gate. At that moment Mrs. Vrooman was calling downstairs to Katie:

"No matter how scared he is! Make him wait!"

"Mother!" shouted back Katie, shortly, "Si has run away! I knew he would!"

Down by the seashore Tom Clark had managed his affairs very well. He had escaped from the crowd on the pier pretty successfully by laying all the blame, as it seemed to him, of saving Squire Lander's boating party upon the head of Si. There was nothing else that he could do for the poor, water-logged "Sea Lion," but he did his duty by the bait and tackle so quickly that he had carried off everything in safety before the people knew what he was doing. It was well he did, for the moment

Mrs. Vrooman and the rest were driven away in the carriage there was a rush to see the boat that had done the rescuing.

Of course it was worth seeing, and there it lay, wrecked and helpless, with its nose against a boulder, until strong hands hauled it high and dry, tipping out its cargo of water.

"Come on, boys!" shouted a man with a very fish-catching appearance. "Let's caulk her up for them. It's the least we can do. 'Tisn't worth a cent, anyhow, but it's all the boat they've got."

"'Tisn't theirs, either," said another, doubtfully. "If you caulk it up good and tight, won't old Saunders be taking it away from 'em and hiring of it aout?"

"If he does," replied the first speaker, "we can put in the leaks again. I'm going for a caulkin' iron and some oakum. The boys must have their boat."

The general idea that the skipper and crew of the "Sea Lion" ought to be rewarded, therefore, had not been diminished by their running away.

Si had carried with him the largest of the bluefish, and Tom had all but staggered under the additions made by the other two to his general burden. Both had gone home with the doleful idea that they had made their last cruise in the "Sea Lion."

Mrs. Vrooman came downstairs as dry as ever, but she and Katie were compelled to forget Si for a while. The doorbell rang and in came a strong party of friends and neighbors, but Katie left the door open behind them so that a second swarm poured in without ringing. They were all loaded with sympathy for half-drowned people, but Katie herself bustled around the house carrying quite other anxiety.

"Mother can't do a thing!" she said to herself. "I must see that things are all to rights. Dear me! The whole village 'll be here!"

Housekeeping seemed to be exactly her place, but she needed not to have worried herself. Everything about that house was as neat as wax. The chairs had been taught just where to go. The curtains hung with precision. Every book and picture and ornament was in its proper nook, including Mrs. Vrooman's work-basket and the cat, after the latter had been expelled from the basket.

Along with the visitors the family physician came, but he must have known what to expect of Mrs. Vrooman, for he dignifiedly remarked to her:

"It is all very well, madam, but I did not advise you to try sea-bathing."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Vrooman.

The Lander house was at the other end of Eastwood village, so that one-half of the population was nearer to him and to his wife and daughter.

It was a good arrangement for dividing the sympathy, for Mrs. Lander's parlor was really crowded and the sympathizers met with more encouragement.

As for the Moore house, away back behind the trees and shrubbery, it was apparently just about the right place for a fellow like Si to go and hide in. When he walked in at the kitchen door a very bright-faced, kindly-looking woman sat near a window, sewing.

"Mother," he said, "here's the biggest of our bluefish. I caught one more. So did Tom. He took them to his house, 'cause they keep boarders."

"Why, Silas," she said, "that's larger than we need. I'm glad it came, though. I was just wishing for something."

She paused, as if admiring his fish, but he proceeded with an explanation that was as tangled as one of Tom's fish-lines. "We came back because the boat leaked. I hid it in the bushes while I went to Mrs. Vrooman's, but she was too awful wet. She wasn't drowned, though, and I got it again and brought it in."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Moore

with very wide-open eyes. "Have you been getting into another scrape? What will Mrs. Vrooman think of you!"

"I can't help what she thinks," said Si. "I couldn't have got there one minute sooner than I did," and then, inch by inch, the whole story of the rescue was drawn out of him.

Mrs. Moore was just beginning to understand it and feel a little proud of him, when his father came in to fill up the gaps in the narrative, but for all he could do it lasted, in one shape or another, all the while the bluefish, or part of it, was broiled and eaten. Dinner was just over, when a feeble old bell, up near the ceiling, began to shake out a coppery kind of rattle.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Moore. "I do hope nobody has come! I haven't had time to fix the parlor."

Si sat still, listening, in some doubt as to what might be the safest thing for him to do, but it was only half a minute before he felt his heart flutter, for his father's voice came back through the hall from the front door:

"Si, come out here!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Si. "I don't want to see em. Mother's there, though. What if it should be Mrs. Vrooman?"

That was an awful idea, but no such trial was before him. He arose and went, wishing the long, shadowy hall of the old, half-furnished house was longer and more shadowy. He marched through it to the front door, however, but when he got there he saw nothing, at first, but a man with a horse and buggy, and then that his father and mother had their hands full.

"Is that you, Mr. Smith?" asked Si.

"Si," said Mr. Smith, "they sent some things to Tom, but those are for you. Squire Lander, he says you're to come over to see him this very afternoon. He wants to show you something."

"Tell him I'll come," said Si, for he was looking at what his mother held up when she exclaimed:

"Look, Si! Look here! See what you got for saving all those people!"

"I didn't save 'em," said Si. "It was the boat, and if she hadn't sprung a leak——"

"Squire Lander, he says it was his life-preservers," remarked Mr. Smith. "Si and Tom, they helped. But how that biggest float of his will squawk. I tried it. I sat down on it. He says he's going to fit on a louder flute, but it doesn't need any."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Si, "what a splendid bass rod! Best kind of reel, too. Whole lot of hooks and lines and things. There isn't any other

fellow about the Cove, or in Eastwood, with such a rod as that."

Mr. Moore had been blowing on something until he was red in the face, but he now had breath enough left to say :

"Look here, Si, if you are ever swamped again you can get ashore. He's sent you two of them. Same kind they had in his boat."

"Why," said Si, "what could I do with 'em? Oh, yes, they'd make the best kind of cushions till you wanted 'em to swim with. I'd take 'em along if mother was to be in the boat."

"I'd be glad to have them," said Mrs. Moore, cheerfully, "only that nothing could ever get me into a boat."

"He wants to see you," said Mr. Smith, and Si almost surprised his parents by his hearty response.

"Tell him I'll come. I thank him ever so much, too. He knew just what I wanted."

It seemed to Si as if something was whispering to him :

"Go! Go to Squire Lander's, if you don't want to be caught by Mrs. Vrooman!"

"She might come right over here," he added in a kind of caution to himself.

Perhaps he knew Mrs. Vrooman pretty well.

There were relatives and intimate friends of her family who remained, of course, after the rest went away, and some of those were going to stay for dinner. She could not get away before that, but as soon as dinner was over she slipped out through the boat-house on an errand that carried her across the road toward the Moore gate.

Si was upstairs, putting on the clothes that belonged to Sunday, and he was looking out of a window when he exclaimed :

"There she comes ! I've got to hurry, now. Oh, dear ! She can talk to mother, if she wants to. I'm going to Lander's !"

So, when Mrs. Vrooman's tall and stately form marched through the Moore gate and on between the ragged barriers of box, Si was already making his escape. He saw her pass the corner of the house, and then he slipped out at the front door and darted across to the tall corn that filled the field toward the village. At the further corner he could get out beyond the line of poplars and the only danger left was in the village.

" I can snake around by the back street," he said. "Maybe I can get to Lander's without meeting a soul."

It was a time of day when few were out, even in the main street, and he was entirely successful, but

he had a nervous idea that he was very near being called out at from the windows of more than one house, just as he was getting past.

"If they do, I won't hear 'em," he said. "They might call me in and make me tell all about it. I wouldn't get to Lander's to-day."

He did get there and he approached the house a little cautiously, but he was surprised to find it looking so shut-up. The windows seemed to be closed, blinds and all, as if something had happened.

"I guess I'll go around to the side door," said Si, and he did so.

It was opened for him, before he had a chance to knock, but the little, sharp-eyed, fat old woman who opened it put a finger on her lips and said :

"Hush, Si ! I'm glad you came. Don't come in. Don't make a sound. Mrs. Lander and Margaret are both in bed and I hope they're asleep. The doctor says they'll be all right in a day or so, but they must keep still and take plenty of nourishment. You're a brave boy, and if I'm ever drowned I want plenty of life-preservers to help me. Square Lander's out in the shop, mending his propeller, but I don't put much faith into any windmill, you can't be always sure of wind."

Perhaps her own supply of breath was failing her,

for she gasped and stopped talking, while Si turned away with a relieved look on his face.

"Ain't I glad!" he exclaimed. "I haven't got to see any of 'em. Nobody need be afraid of the squire. He's never cranky unless he's inventing something awful. I'll go right to the shop."

Away back of the house, in a line with the woodshed and reaching almost to the barn, ran a long, one-story brick building, with a remarkably tall chimney at the further end. Its one door was in the middle, and Si went to it with a flush on his face.

"Haven't I wanted to get in?" he said, just before he knocked. "It's where he makes his new inventions. There's loads of them in there now."

When the door swung open, he did indeed see Squire Lander, smiling and holding out his hand and saying:

"Come right in, Si. Glad you came. Glad you didn't bring anybody else;"—but Si's eyes had taken him for granted, and they went flashing all around the long, queer, cluttering area of that shop. He knew, in that second of time, that it was mostly work-benches on the sides, with vises and turning-lathes and the like; that overhead it was mainly shafts and wheels and leather bands; that one end was a forge and the other a steam engine, and that

all the floor between the ends and the sides was so occupied with all sorts of shapes in metal and wood that there was hardly left a good path around them, with here and there a kind of short-cut lane through them.

He stepped in quickly, and he knew that the squire shut the door behind him and bolted it, but the first words he uttered were :

"Tell you what, Squire Lander, I was never in a machinery shop before in all my life!"

"Is that so?" laughed the inventor. "Well, there isn't any other shop just like this, for you to go into. This is the shop where things begin. Glad you came. I'll show you something. Glad you and your boat didn't get to us any sooner, though—not till we'd had a good trial of the life-preservers."

"They worked first-rate," replied Si, politely. "They're as good as cork and they're just the thing to sit on in a boat."

CHAPTER V.

TOM AND HIS TRIALS.

"WHERE'S that boy Si, Mrs. Moore?"

The peremptory tone and manner of the question fitted Mrs. Vrooman as exactly as her dress did, and that was saying a great deal, but Mrs. Moore did not appear to be so completely suited. She arose at the instant when her stately neighbor appeared in the kitchen doorway, but her own placid manner had vanished.

"Si has gone to the Landers's," she said. "The squire sent for him."

"Why!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman, almost indignantly. "I wanted to see him! What did he go away for?"

Mrs. Moore straightened up and responded, very curtly:

"Now, Mrs. Vrooman, if you have any fault to find with Si, you can say it to me. You are always finding fault with him."

"Mrs. Moore!—I——"

"I don't care whether you like it or not," continued Si's mother, still more warmly: "you don't understand Si at all. He's one of the best boys there ever was. He couldn't help your boat upsetting—no more than he had to do with lots of other things you've laid to him. I'm sure he did the best he could, and most people would be thankful."

It looked as if this might not be their first encounter with reference to Si.

"Why, Mrs. Moore!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman, in astonishment, as she sank upon a chair, uninvited. "I didn't say he tipped us over! He saved us all from those life-preservers! I always did like Si, and I've thought again and again what I could do for him. Captain Vrooman says, though, that no boy like him ought ever to go to sea. He ought not to think of going, and if I were you——"

"Going to sea?" replied Mrs. Moore, lifting both her hands. "I wouldn't have him go to sea, not for all the world! Not even if he was to be a captain on the biggest kind of wages. Why, he wouldn't sometimes come home once in six months."

"No more he wouldn't, and he's a fine young fellow," began Mrs. Vrooman, but the voice of Mr. Moore, in the doorway behind her, remarked:

"I guess he is, Mrs. Vrooman, I'm glad he had

the good luck to be there when your boat went over. It's time he had some luck. How do you feel now?"

"Oh, I feel first-rate," she said. "It wasn't anything. I wanted to see Si, though. He came over to our house and Katie saw him. Then he ran away. He always does. Tell him he must come over and see me. The captain's coming home pretty soon——"

"I'll tell him that," said Mrs. Moore. "He always liked the captain. I won't ever let him go to sea. But do tell me how it was about your boat going over."

That turned the talk from Si to Squire Lander for a moment, but it drifted all around. Mr. Moore was inclined to defend the squire, too, for he said:

"I don't know what he's up to, now, Mrs. Vrooman, but he has good luck with some of his inventions. Made money——"

"So he has," she replied, briskly, "but I'd rather he'd take somebody else with him next time. I'd better go home now, I guess. They'll think I left them. Katie's there."

Katie was indeed there, but she was now almost alone, for the visitors had departed. The absence of Mrs. Vrooman had been very quickly discovered,

and it had been of little use for Katie to try to explain it. Not one of them really liked the idea of Mrs. Vrooman feeling so well so soon after being drowned. Neither did they like it that she went off alone to the Moores' place, to see Si, and then, quite as much as anything, they all really felt like going somewhere else, to tell what they knew about the upset.

Tom Clark had been having a real hard time. His folks at home, including his mother's summer boarders, had eaten his two bluefish, but he had not been able to get away at all. He was compelled to stay and answer questions, and it had almost made matters worse that a man from Squire Lander's brought him also a lot of tackle and a new rod. His mother was very proud of it, of course, but she was so delighted that she had shown them to her boarders, and the rod had been immediately borrowed by a slim young man from the city who had hired her attic bedroom. He said he could catch fish—he knew he could—with such a rod as that, and Mrs. Clark felt that she was caught and could not refuse.

"Guess I could have got away," thought Tom, "without letting him have it. He won't hurt it, though. Hope he won't catch anything but sculpins."

Still, Tom felt bitter about that, and sick about the "Sea Lion," and he said, as if in self-defense:

"I didn't have anything much to do with it, mother. Old Lander, he upset his boat, he and the steamer, and it was Si that worked our boat. They saved the life-preservers themselves. Old Lander fished up a lot of 'em. There wasn't one lost. All I reached for was the oars and a basket."

"Mrs. Vrooman will be sending him something," declared one of the women boarders to one of the neighbors, "and first you know he'll be spoiled."

Tom felt so himself, for he was thinking:

"I don't care what they send, if it's to be lent out or locked up."

If Tom was having a hard time, Katie's lot had become entirely easy before her mother got away from the Moore place. Being left alone, under such circumstances, was about what she could have asked for. She went around the house, putting things to rights and singing. Nothing could be plainer than that she was doing just what she liked, but when she stepped out into the boat-house museum her manner changed at once.

"It must be in perfect order when father gets here," she said. "No, we won't open that other box until he opens it himself. Oh, dear me! What a mess the boat is! They all need dusting, too. It must blow in from the road——"

There was, indeed, something odd about dust on

the clothes of sailors in a boat, but it brushed off easily, and there they sat, as silent as ever, but more tidy.

"Seems to me it's the queerest idea I ever knew father to have," she said. "Now I must fix up the books. I can arrange the shells, too, and the corals, but I don't like to meddle with the skulls and bones."

Shells? Where could even a sea-captain have picked up such wonders of shell beauty? They were of all sorts and sizes, and some were sheltered in simply-made glass cabinets. Among the larger specimens were huge conches, with flaring valves and glowing interiors, rainbow and pearl and polish. There were spirals and cups and oddities. There were starfish and swordfish blades and narwhale bayonets and thrashers of uncommon length. One shelf carried a fine collection of shark's teeth, walrus tusks, carved and uncarved, and there were tortoise shells of several grades. Besides all these, there were many examples of what could be done with sea materials by sailors and savages with much spare time on their hands and a natural turn for sculpture. The clubs and spears, the bows and arrows and war trophies were a treasure. Take it all together, it was enough to make any boy—like Si, for instance—dream of the sea and of a sailor's life, and of the

far-away romance lands visited by such sailors as Captain Vrooman.

Katie may have been hardened to it, for at last she took up the paper-weight skull and put it away on a shelf as unconcernedly as if it had been a conch. She had shut up the "Robinson Crusoe," but was still busy with the books when her mother came in, a little hurriedly, and began to speak at once:

"I've had such a time with Mrs. Moore," she said. "Why, Katie, Si thinks we don't like him. I don't understand it. I never heard of such a thing!"

"Why, mother," said Katie, "how's he ever going to find out whether people like him or not, when he's so bashful? He'd be quite a nice boy, if it wasn't for that."

"I don't care if he is bashful," said Mrs. Vrooman. "He ought to know better. I'm thankful they've all gone. They're kind, but there's been too much fuss. Now you just take the glass and go up and see if there's any smoke from Squire Lander's shop chimney. If there isn't his wife may be sick and I ought to go and see her. She was scared half to death, and it wasn't anything at all. You needn't hurry down, either."

Somehow or other it seemed to Katie as if telescope-work offered her the very change of occupation she was wishing for. It had been a trying and nervous

kind of day, after all, and she caught up the glass with a distinct idea that the "top" was an old friend of hers that was telling her to come up and be happy.

The slender flagstaff was bending a little and the streamer at its peak was fluttering merrily, but the wind that blew was warm, and not only the "top" itself was cosy, but it seemed solidly based upon its burly spar.

There was an air of safety about it such as might be put on by any stout stick used to being at sea and knowing the difference between rough water and Captain Vrooman's side-yard.

Katie did not wait to seat herself, but she at once pulled out the telescope and leveled it across the village at the Lander place.

"Yes, there is," she said. "It's the blackest kind of smoke. I guess Mrs. Lander isn't sick enough to hurt her. Besides, Si's there, and we can find out from him when he gets back. I wonder what experiment the squire's trying now."

Her curiosity did not prevent her from settling herself and training her glass in other directions, constantly, and she had no idea why her mother had told her not to hurry down. That very self-possessed woman was now seated at the sitting-room table, doing absolutely nothing, and was saying, to nobody:

"I'm glad they're all gone! I'm glad Katie's up there! I just do believe I'm a little upset after all!"

So was Si, at that very moment, in the workshop of the inventor. It took him a good long breathing spell, after his first greeting, to collect his thoughts again and get his eyes back to Squire Lander's smiling face. He remembered, after trying twice, that it was his next duty to thank the squire for the presents, but the moment he began he was cut short with:

"Pooh! pooh! Don't say any more, I had them in the shop. I never go fishing. I only bought them because I was making some improvements in rods and tackle. The reels? Why, that biggest, best reel is one I invented myself. I'm making money out of that thing——"

"I'd like to invent something," said Si. "I've tried, lots of times, but I can't make anything work."

"Tried? Have you? And couldn't make things work?" exclaimed the inventor. Why, that's just like me. I've invented lots of things that wouldn't work. They weren't worth a cent——"

"Was it one of them that you were going to show me?" asked Si, glancing around him, "or was it something else?"

"Show you? Oh, yes, I sent word I had something for you to see. Why, I meant to show you

the shop. I never let any boys come in here. I thought you'd like to see it."

"I guess I do!" exclaimed Si. "I'd rather see the shop than anything else I ever saw. But you haven't any workmen."

"I don't need any," replied the squire, a little proudly. "That is, not often. I'm a master machinist myself. Served my apprenticeship when I was a boy. Learned to make anything, from a needle to a steam-engine. I've been learning more and more, ever since. I'm the workman of this shop."

"I can't make anything, hardly," said Si, in a desponding tone of voice. "I don't know how to make things fit. I can whittle, and hammer, and file, and saw, and bore holes, and I can glue things together, but——"

There he paused, as if a little ashamed of having said so much, but he was intensely in earnest, and Squire Lander looked at him very approvingly.

"You can—can you?" he said. "Now I'm going to show you my tools, and see if you know what to do with them."

"Some I do and some I don't," said Si. "I know all the common tools. I know what a turning-lathe is——"

So he thought, until Squire Lander began to show him some curious things that could be done with

one. The next thing was the steam-engine, and they were busy with that when the squire suddenly strode away, the whole length of the shop, remarking merrily:

"I mustn't forget my copper soup."

Si was at his heels when they reached what he had taken for a kind of blacksmith's forge. So it was, for an anvil stood near it, and there were hammers of several sizes and a bellows. It was not like any other forge, however, for the bellows were quiet, and yet he could see that a strong blast of air was coming up through the hotly glowing fire around a large crucible that sat in the middle of the fire-level.

"Somehow or other it blows itself," said Si.

"No, it doesn't," laughed the inventor. "That's a steam-blower, and it is run by the engine. I only use the bellows on small work. It takes a steady blast to melt copper. It blows right along, when I'm at other work."

"Going to run some copper?" asked Si.

"No," said the squire. "I'm making some very hard brass for some of my parts of machines. Common brass won't do."

"Making brass?" said Si. "I never knew how they did it. I kind of thought it—well, I thought it was always brass."

"No, it isn't," replied the inventor. "Most brass is made by melting some zinc and putting in twice as much copper and letting it all melt together. I don't do it that way. I'm trying something new. I've melted my copper first, and they all say I couldn't do it this way."

"How do you know you can?" asked Si, as the cover was removed from the crucible and he saw the glancing, brilliant face of the liquid metal. "Oh, but isn't it splendid!"

"I don't know anything till I've tried," said his friend seriously, as he held out a small iron ladleful of something dark and sandy looking, and poured it quickly into the crucible. "There!"

"It smokes some," said Si.

"It ought not to!" exclaimed the squire. "Hullo! Did I make a mistake? Why I've put in the wrong stuff. No use. I'll have to try again. I'll just take that crucible off and run it into slugs, and to-morrow I'll have another melting."

He seemed a little disappointed, but Si was not. He thought he had never enjoyed anything more than he did seeing that copper poured out into a set of moulds that would make small bars of it.

"You haven't wasted anything?" he ventured to ask.

"Oh, no," said Squire Lander. "It's all there.

Besides, I've made a kind of experiment, after all, and I'll see how it'll turn out."

"I suppose, if you have any luck, it'll be brass," remarked Si.

"There never was any luck," laughed the inventor. "I never had any."

"There's luck in fishing?" said Si.

"No, there isn't," responded Squire Lander, decidedly. "You never caught a fish in your life, unless you were there, ready to catch it, with your line out."

Si was silent, but he was watching the slowly cooling slugs, and he was aware of an intense curiosity as to what they would be when they cooled. Would they, could they, be anything but copper?

"Squire Lander," he exclaimed, suddenly, "may I come again?"

"Of course you may," said the inventor, heartily. "I like the way you handled your boat. I must go in the house pretty soon and see how they are getting along. You may come here any day when I'm at work. If I don't happen to want you here that day I'll tell you when to come again."

"I'll be awful glad to come," was what Si said, but he could not have spoken what was exactly going on in his mind.

It was a great deal as if the tools and machinery

had been talking to him and boasting of what they could do, especially in the hands of an inventor. They were not ordinary brass and iron, doing things that ever so many men had done before. They were like so many explorers, all the while at sea and expecting to find something new. It was a kind of romance, and Si felt like asking if they really had any idea where they were going to land next. He was slowly walking toward the door, however, and the squire said to him :

"You can go right along now, Si. I'll let off steam first and then I'll go. Are you going home ?"

"Yes, sir," said Si.

"Well, I wish you'd tell your father I'm coming there pretty soon to have a talk with him. I've an idea about an improvement on that place. Good-bye."

Si believed that he said something or other, but he was not sure about it. He hurried into the street, and even after he got there he seemed to be walking along with a queer company of wonderful machines and new inventions.

"I'm going to make something," he said. "Now you see if I don't. I'm going to make something that nobody ever saw before !"

Katie, in the "top," had been taking a long and lazy kind of resting spell, but she now raised her

telescope again and leveled it at the Lander shop chimney.

"It isn't smoking now," she said. "I'll make Si tell me what he saw there. I've always wanted to go into that shop. They say it's the queerest place!"

She had been up there long enough, and she now shut the glass and began to work her way down the rope-ladder. Perhaps she had seen all there was worth seeing, but if she had been out in the road she might have seen one more object of interest. It was a short, very sturdy boy, who came up the hill as if he cared nothing at all how hot a day it was. He was all in a glow, and he pushed along through the open gate of the Moore place vigorously. On he went, without a pause, all the way around the house and when he reached the kitchen door he had just breath enough left to put his red face a little inside and ask:

"Mrs. Moore, where's Si?"

"He's gone to Squire Lander's," she said, beaming on him kindly. "Why, Tom, what's the matter? Has anything happened?"

"Guess there has!" he exclaimed, with a gasp and a chuckle. "You can tell Si that the fellers have mended our boat. Caulked her fine. She's afloat again, dry as a bone. Ain't I glad I got away from those folks at our house! Tell you

what, Mrs. Moore, old Lander, he sent me a new rod——"

"So he did to Si," she said. "Splendid one!"

"Mine's just great," continued Tom, as if almost afraid of being interrupted, "but mother, she had to go and borrer it to that peaked-nose chap that sleeps in the garret, and he's gone out in a boat. Tell Si if he brings it back we can go a-fishing to morrow. Guess we'll go anyway, but we'll want to see how those rods work. She doesn't leak a drop——Glad Si's going to have one. But isn't it great about the 'Sea Lion'? Guess her oakum 'll stay in this time."

The boys were therefore winding up a very remarkable day, for the seashore, with a fine prospect of another great cruise right before them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRUISE TO FOAM ISLAND.

Si reached home in safety by going around the village. He went across the fields and did not meet anybody to ask him questions about the upset. That way of getting there, however, brought him to the further side of the Moore farm, or, rather, to the side of it on which there was no farm at all. It was all swamp, and a not very good-looking, shallow pond. There were twenty acres wasted in that manner, to the ridge beyond which the land sloped toward the shore. All the land between the ridge and the shore road belonged to Mr. Sampson. Part of the ridge itself was high and rocky, but it was all so solid that no water could run out of the swamp in that direction. It had been swampy and watery there ever since the ridge was made, and Si was entirely right when he took a look over it all and remarked:

"It isn't a cent's worth of good, but then, it's a pretty large part of our farm. So are the rocks,

but you can't invent any way of getting rid of them."

There were some pretty good fields between the swamp and the house, and they were in a fair state of cultivation. Si went along the fences as nearly as the raspberry and blackberry bushes would let him, but almost any of those fields could have been widened a little by cutting up bushes.

"Father says he has thought of doing it," said Si, "and I wish he would. He'd have to hire men, but then he says he's having pretty good luck this year. Wish I knew if there had anybody come to the house."

When he said that he was standing between the corn-crib and the large barn, behind a high-headed bunch of dock, and the next he said was:

"There they go out of the gate! Four of 'em. Now I can go right in. If there were any left mother wouldn't stand there, in the door, with my bass-rod."

She held it in her hand, and she had been showing it to her neighbors with pride and pleasure. They had also examined the reels and other tackle, and they had remarked, admiringly:

"Didn't cost him a cent! He got 'em all by just being there, with his boat, at the right time to save old Lander and his life-preservers?"

Before they reached the front gate Si was in the house. He had much to say and so had his mother, but he also had chores to do, and there was not nearly time enough on hand for talking it all over. Mr. Moore himself had returned from a trip to the village, and he meant to go again in the evening, but he said to Si:

"Be sure you feed up them chickens. We're having great luck, this year, ever since I coopered up that old poultry yard and the coops. We haven't lost any chickens, to speak of, and we've had five times as many eggs. I've been thinking about it a good deal."

Si went on about his chores, but after supper he said something about going to bed early, and his mother replied:

"Best thing you could do, Si, after all you've been through to-day. Then if anybody comes in you won't have to see them."

She knew him like a book, and he believed she was the best mother in the world, for when a little after seven o'clock, the bell clanked out that someone at the front door was pulling it, she said :

"There, Si! Take your candle and go right upstairs. I won't call you down for anybody. You've done enough."

So he was in his room before whoever it was got

into the house, and he had a safe, walled-in and protracted feeling, but he had to put out his candle.

"Guess the wind comes over the swamp," he said, "and all the mosquitoes have come a-visiting. Hear 'em sing?"

Si's room was a pretty large one in the southerly wing of the house, and after the candle was out nobody could see what was in it. Si could be seen, for he sat by the window in the moonlight for a long time, staring out among the trees and shadows just as he had stared from the knob of the rock at the Cove. Now and then he said something, but only enough to let out that he was thinking of Captain Vrooman's boat-house, Squire Lander's workshop, "Robinson Crusoe," and Mrs. Vrooman. Just as he gave it up, however, and began to get ready for bed he muttered:

"Tell you what! I believe that old garret of ours is a kind of museum. It hasn't ever been stirred up and rooted out since father bought the house, ten years ago. Nobody ever goes up there, and it's ram-jam full of things. I'm going fishing in that garret before long; you see if I don't!"

If anything else happened before daylight next morning, neither Silas Moore nor Tom Clark knew anything about it. As for Tom, he really slept well, for the new rod and all had been brought back

in good condition and were lying across the foot of Tom's bed. The slim young man who had borrowed it had not given it a good fish-catching character, however, and had complained that his bait would not stay on.

"Besides," he said, "those rough-looking little fish that I caught most of, swallow the hook so you can hardly get them off. I think I had luck, though, for I've twenty-one of them."

"Twenty-one sculpins!" exclaimed Tom, as he examined that string of prizes. Two tom-cods and a sea-robbin! I'm glad the boys didn't see him bring 'em ashore."

It was a good summer night for sleeping, and the morning dawned splendidly along the billowy sea and on the peaceful farms and villages that lined the shore. The rising sun scattered the thin banks of morning fog until it could see the white sails of coasting craft; and the broader wings of the great lumber-schooners that were carrying Maine and Nova Scotia pine to the city; and the freight steamers and passenger steamers that coughed and whistled at each other and at some of the sailing craft. The Sound was, after all, nothing but a traveled road, where the drivers of all sorts had to keep a sharp watch for fear their teams might run against each other and smash things all to ruin.

Of course, there were signs of life on the shore as well as on the sea, even before the sun was up, but it was just as the morning light began to sift down through the trees into the back-yard of the Moore place that one of the liveliest looking signs came and stood by the well-house and looked up at a southerly window and whistled through two fingers. It was a tip-top whistle, but it was hardly blown when another very much like it came back from the open window. Two steamers on the Sound could hardly have done their signaling more perfectly, and Tom exclaimed, almost dancing:

"Oh, but ain't I glad I got away! They won't be borrowing my new rig to-day! Glad Si's up and dressed. Guess we won't go for sculpins and sea-robbins, though. Wasn't that a string?"

It was only a minute or so before he was telling about it to Si, while they were putting in all their joint industry upon Si's chores, so that he could be free to go on a cruise in the "Sea Lion."

Only a little later there was a subdued stir and clatter in the Vrooman kitchen, for Katie was bustling around with a declared purpose of getting breakfast all by herself.

"I'm glad mother's asleep," she said. "The new help 'll be here to-day, and she 'll have enough to do then. They always make so much work!"

If that was her idea of "help," she certainly did not seem to need any, but whatever she took in hand seemed almost to do itself. There is a sort of magic in quick fingers, guided by eyes like Katie Vrooman's, with a kind of snap in them. If her father was a "captain" and her mother the first mate of the Vrooman family ship, Katie may have inherited from both of them a disposition to have everything around her all right and "ship-shape." At all events, she made the kitchen and the dining-room look like "good-morning" all over, and there was hardly a thing left to be done when her mother came marching through to hug the young housekeeper and exclaim, "Oh, Katie! how I did sleep! I did dream, though, in spite of everything——"

"About being upset?" asked Katie.

"Never mind what it was, dear. I want to see Si, just as soon as I can. His boat was worth all the life-preservers."

"Dear me!" said Katie; "I guess it was. But I don't want any more balky horses when I'm in a hurry."

They had plenty to talk about and a very pleasant place to talk in, but it was all nothing to what Si and Tom believed that they had. Si's chores had gone by as if four boys were doing them, instead of two, and all their tackle was ready this time—the

best kind of tackle—and even their lunch basket had been packed the night before by Si's mother. So when they reached the shore and pulled in the "Sea Lion" from her float, they had almost nothing left to do but to get on board and stow things, including a jug of fresh water, and then hoist the sail.

"Hurrah!" shouted Si, "she won't leak this time!"

"I guess we won't have to rescue anybody, either, and spoil our day's fishing," replied Tom. "She's a runner!"

The "Sea Lion" did, indeed, seem to be in good spirits that morning, and away she went, careening good-naturedly as the fresh breeze crowded against her sail and hurried her along on the water. It was almost as if she and the wind had agreed together to make a short trip to Foam Island.

"We'll have to tack, soon," said Si, "but we'll get there this time. We'll catch loads of bass and weakfish, and I want a good look all over the wreck."

"They're going to break it up and haul it away," said Tom. "There's lots of good timber in it."

"Maybe there's something else," suggested Si. "She went so high and dry they all got off safe, and they took off the cargo, but she's there yet and it'll be the best kind of fun to go through her."

Tom agreed to that, but he was already in a state

of mind over the fact that not one inquiring fish had struck at the new and brilliant spoon-hooks which he and Si were towing astern.

On went the "Sea Lion" over the tossing sea, but matters and things on shore were also going forward.

Between the house and the barns of the Moore place, about half way, a somewhat disappointed looking man had just been asking of Mr. Moore:

"Where's Si?" and had been told about the cruise to Foam Island.

"I reckoned that if I got here early enough, I'd find him," replied Squire Lander. "I wanted to tell him something. Your place is looking pretty well—better than usual."

"Well, yes," said Mr. Moore. "It needs a heap of fixing up, but I have not had much luck since I bought till this year. Just got along. I had some luck before that, so I paid for it. Property's risen a good deal since then, but I ain't goin' to sell out."

"Corn looks well," said the inventor.

"Well, yes, it does," admitted Mr. Moore, circumspectly. "I thought about it a good deal, and then I tried fertilizers and deep plowing, and I've taken good care of it. Guess I'll have good luck with it. So I did with my wheat and oats. Best luck I ever had, too."

"The orchard looks fine," remarked Squire Lander. "You are going to have loads of fruit. There's more market for fruit than there used to be."

"Well, yes," said Mr. Moore. "I'm having good luck with fruit. I studied that matter and I thought I'd pruned the trees to death, but they're bearing well. It's going to be a lucky year and may be I can fix things up a little."

No doubt Squire Lander was interested in his neighbor's good luck, but he went away before long, remarking:

"Tell Si I want to see him."

It was getting well on into the forenoon, and things at the Vrooman place were not quite so peaceful as they had been. That is, something like a disturbance had followed upon a trip that Katie made into the village and back. She went primly, but she went to the post-office and then she came home with the face and manner of a girl who would not be stopped for anything, and did not care to speak to anybody. It was a clear case of happiness in a hurry, and she was hardly inside of the house before she shouted:

"Mother! Mother! It's a letter from father, and it's postmarked New York! The 'Wanderer' is in port! He's there!"

"Oh, dear! dear! Quick, child! Let me see

that letter! Oh, Katie! Katie! I'm so glad! Bring it right here!"

Why, it was curious. Mrs. Vrooman had suddenly changed into another woman, with no coolness nor stateliness, nor anything about her that even Si Moore could have been afraid of. Whatever else there may have been in that letter, Katie danced around the room and repeated after her mother:

"He says he's coming! Soon as the cargo of the 'Wanderer' is attended to. Oh!"

As for Si, he had pulled in his line remarking to Tom that they were running too fast for good trolling, and Tom had followed his example. Tom, however, dwelt liberally upon their prospects for good fishing in the waters between Foam Island and the mainland, and in some eddy he knew of near the wreck. Si's mind did not seem to be altogether given to fish, as he leaned back in the stern and steered the "Sea Lion." It was a very comfortable employment for a boy that loved the sea and felt at home in a boat. There was no work in it, hardly any more than in Tom's business of watching the sail, between glances across the water at other craft and in search of any possible signs of fish.

"Si," he suddenly exclaimed, "isn't that a shark's fin? Looks like it."

"Don't care if it is," lazily responded Si. "I wasn't thinking of sharks, but the cannibals use shark-teeth to edge their swords with. Make them tear a man all up. I want to see all there is in Captain Vrooman's boat-house. That's one thing."

"I've seen it all," interrupted Tom. "You don't care to see it but once."

"Yes, I do," said Si; "and I want to see what they all are—all the things he's put there. But you ought to see Squire Lander's workshop."

"There'd be some fun in that," said Tom, "but I know about a steam engine now."

Si lay still and thought for a full minute, before he spoke again.

"Then there's our garret," he said. "I'm going to rummage that, soon's I can; but I wonder what we're going to find on board the wreck."

"So do I," exclaimed Tom, "and we're 'most there, now. One tack more and we can head her straight for the island."

The wind was fresh, the "Sea Lion" was doing her best, and there, in full view to the eastward of her present line of sailing, lay a number of acres of sand hills, at the further end of which arose a rugged cluster of not very high rocks, against which the waves were breaking. In among those rocks there lay something which was evidently not rock, and

from which arose three shattered timbers which might be very probably the stumps of broken masts.

"There she is," said Tom.

"There she is!" responded Si, almost getting up. "What do you mean? Who are they? How did they get there? Why, Tom, there's a whole lot of them! They're all women. I can't see one man among them!"

"Too bad!" said Tom, indignantly. "All our fun 'll be knocked on the head. If there's anything I hate it's a crowd of women. So does mother. She'd rather have men for summer boarders, any day."

"They can't spoil our fishing," said Si, "but I won't go to the wreck. I won't go to the island while they're there."

There they were, however, and they were all down at the nearest shore-line waving handkerchiefs, swinging parasols, beckoning, and in a moment more Tom declared:

"Si, they're just yelling to us to come. Guess we'll have to go and see what they want of us. It's just awful!"

"That's what they mean," almost groaned Si, as he turned the prow of the "Sea Lion" toward the island.

"Now, Tom, if they want to hire us to go anywhere, don't let's go. 'Tisn't what we came for."

Nearer dashed the "Sea Lion," with the impulse of a new errand and a strong gust of wind, and those women along the shore continued to wave their handkerchiefs and shout and beckon until even Si remarked:

"Look at 'em! Tell you what, Tom, I shouldn't wonder if something had happened!"

"Guess there has," said Tom. "They wouldn't make all that fuss for nothing."

"Course they wouldn't," replied Si thoughtfully, "but I don't see what could happen on Foam Island."

"May be they went on board the wreck and found something awful," suggested Tom. "It would be just like 'em. I kind of want to know what it is."

"Well!" said Si, with an increase of interest, "don't know but what I do. I always did believe there was something there. But then, we wanted to find it ourselves."

"Come! Oh, do come!"

The boys could hear that plaintive summons now in spite of the wind, and Si put his hand by his mouth and vigorously shouted back:

"All right! We're coming!"

"They heard it," remarked Tom, "but they're dancing around just as crazy as ever. What on earth is the matter?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE WRECK OF THE "SEA LION."

In Eastwood and around the Cove, that forenoon there seemed to be but little left of the sensation caused by the Lander upset of the day before. That is, it had all gone except a kind of ripple which inclined people to discuss life-preservers. The general tendency of public opinion, however, seemed to favor cork in preference to bags of wind.

It was the finest kind of weather for farm-work and for growth of any sort. Mr. Moore was, therefore, busied in his garden. He had enough to do, too, for he was directing a pair of laborers who evidently needed standing over while they battled with an army of weeds which had invaded and threatened to take possession of the garden.

"I thought so," he said to his wife, when she came out to look on. "We wouldn't have had any luck if we had let these things get ahead of us."

"That's what they almost did," she said. "But I was thinking of Silas. I do hope he will catch a

good lot of fish. He was so disappointed about it yesterday."

"Si? Disappointed?" exclaimed Mr. Moore. "Why, he and Tom caught some bluefish—besides Mrs. Vrooman and the Landers. He had first-rate luck. He won't do any better to-day."

That might be, and at that hour Si himself was beginning to feel doubtful. He was steering the "Sea Lion" straight into a bit of sandy inlet which seemed to him to be lined and bordered by half-frantic women, every one of whom carried a handkerchief and a parasol.

"Tom," he said, "isn't this awful!"

"They want the boat. I know they do," responded Tom, ruefully. "You don't mean to let 'em have it, do you?"

"No, sir-ree, we won't!" said Si. "But there's such a lot of them! That woman there looks a good deal like Mrs. Vrooman."

"No girls among 'em, anyhow," remarked Tom, as if that were a crumb of encouragement.

Perhaps the boys might have been less disturbed in mind by the apparent prospect before them if they previously had been for a little while upon the land, that is, upon Foam Island, instead of upon the sea.

There were five of them, that was all, and one was indeed a very dignified matron, as much so as

Mrs. Vrooman. Another was even more so, but she was short and thin, so that her dignity could not be seen from a distance. The three others were fine examples of the truth that young men of Si's age and Tom's do not look upon twenty-year-old society belles as "girls." Si, moreover, did not agree with Tom, when he remarked :

"There are not so many of them, after all," for the island, at least that shore of it, seemed to Si to be dangerously crowded. He should have heard their remarks and exclamations :

"What a horrible night we have had !"

"Oh, horrible !"

"Worse than shipwrecked !"

"We are all nearly dead with thirst and hunger !"

"Help is coming at last. We couldn't have stood it much longer !"

"We shall be saved——"

"I hope their boat doesn't leak——"

"Will they take us ashore——?"

"They've got to !" exclaimed the shorter dignity.

They were very pale, weary-looking, distressed, miserable, and the first words the boys heard, as the "Sea Lion" ran into the inlet and dropped her sail and pushed her nose into the sand, were :

"Water ! Oh, boys, have you any water ?"

"Got a jug full," shouted Tom, as he darted to-

ward the cubby at the prow of the "Sea Lion." "Gallon jug! Did you forget to bring any?"

"Forget to bring any?" repeated the tallest woman, huskily. "Why, our boat got away, last evening, and we've been here all night without a drop."

"And hollering for help all the while to make you thirsty," exclaimed Tom, with intense sympathy. "Glad we've got some. Only one cup, but you can take turns."

Tom was out on the sand with his jug, and the five women clustered around him instantly. He was coming out strong, but Si still felt a little crushed until he thought of the lunch-basket.

"There!" he exclaimed. "No supper and no breakfast! They can eat what we've got and I'll hunt for clams! Loads of 'em."

He secured the "Sea Lion" quickly, and marched bravely forward into the group of which Tom was the happy center.

"Something to eat," he said. "I don't know what mother put into it. Tom, let's roast some clams for 'em."

"Tell you what, Si," said Tom; "they took a boat at Puttogue; they're boarding there; and they sailed and sailed until they landed here, and they didn't hitch her right, and she floated off, but they

all slep' on board the wreck. Good as a house, too, but there wasn't a drop o' water."

"Ought to have had a man with 'em," suggested Si, humbly, but the largest woman pursed her lips as she exclaimed:

"Man! Indeed! Guess I know how to sail a boat! They were all scared to death, but I wasn't——"

"Why," interrupted the short, thin, erect walking lady, in spite of her very red eyes, "it is nothing more than a seaside adventure!"

"Don't let them drink it all up at once, Tom," said Si, as he turned away. "They'll want to drink again, after the clams."

Away he went, along the beach, after safely anchoring the "Sea Lion," leaving Tom to do the duty of dividing the provisions fairly.

"There's only just about enough to go 'round," Tom had told them. "It wasn't meant to be enough for five."

What astonished him was that the three younger women all laughed at once, and that one of them said to another:

"Now, Belle, don't be a pig."

He at once handed Belle a cold boiled egg, but no boy of his age ever said anything more after being laughed at.

Si had escaped to a distance of at least twenty yards and was beginning to feel better. He stood still and looked at the water, thinking aloud:

"I can't get any clams without wading for them. I'd better roll up my trousers. But our fishing 's done for——"

Just at that moment a voice as commanding as Mrs. Vrooman's came rapidly nearer, saying to him:

"Did you say you were going after anything else?"

"Clams——" began Si, almost confidently.

"No, you won't!" she said. "You and he can take us right into your boat and sail for Puttogue: We won't wait a minute. We'll pay you——"

"Don't want any pay, ma'am. We were going fishing," said Si.

"Come along, then," she commanded. "If the boat 'll carry us all."

"Of course it will," said Si. "She doesn't leak a drop since they calked her. But the wind isn't right, and it'll be a long sail to Puttogue. Tacking all the way."

So much the more urgent was she, and so were all the rest after her, for an immediate setting out. They were all in the boat, with their parasols and satchels, before she could be shoved off.

"Tom," whispered Si, "no wreck for us to-day, nor any fish, either. It's worse than it was yesterday."

"No, it isn't," said Tom; "she isn't going to leak. We can get 'em there."

The "Sea Lion" was a good boat, but seven, of all sizes, made a pretty full cargo for her, and it was well that the wind was no fresher.

For some time after she left the shore Si and Tom were permitted to give their whole attention to seamanship, with some advice from the taller woman. At the same time they heard over and over again the story of the voyage from Puttogue, the landing on Foam Island, the visit to the fascinating wreck, and the horror of five women at finding themselves, as Tom called it, "Robinson Crusoes." Of course, both of the boys now knew pretty well the names of their passengers, but they had not as yet ventured to say anything more definite than "ma'am," except when Tom whispered to Si:

"Belle and her cousins didn't get any eggs, I guess. There were only four——"

"Yes, we did," laughed Belle. "Mrs. Bronson was left out. She went after Si. I wish you had brought more."

Before any good explanations could be invented the short, thin woman remarked:

"I suppose this is quite an adventure for a pair of shore boys. Saving five women."

"Well, no, ma'am," remarked Si, coloring badly. "You were all high and dry. We had to pull them right out of the water yesterday——"

"Were they drowning?" asked Belle, while Si heard several other voices exclaiming:

"How was it?"

"Not a bit," said Si. "It was old Lander did it —he and his life-preservers."

After that there was no escape for him and Tom, and the story of the upset seemed almost to restore the good spirits of the desert island party. Besides all that, Mrs. Bronson evidently thought it her duty to question the boys as to their friends and families at home, what they were studying at school, and where they went to church on Sunday.

"It's worse than Mrs. Vrooman," thought Si. "She never asked me so many questions in all my life."

If he could at that hour have gone across the street from his own house he might have found that Mrs. Vrooman could ask a great many questions, after losing her breath and having it come back to her. There had been the queerest kind of time ever since Katie returned from the post-office. The gate and the front door were wide open. So

was the door of the boat-house. The house was silent, except for the occasional rattle or rustle of putting something in good shape to be looked at; but, for all that, it seemed as if every room was full of:

"Coming! Coming! He's coming!"

Mrs. Vrooman did not say it, nor Katie, that they knew of, but at last there was a sound of wheels at the gate, and Mrs. Vrooman turned pale and sat down for a moment, while Katie dashed toward the entry with both hands out, shouting:

"Mother! He's come!"

Deep, musical, rich-toned, a laugh, laugh, laugh, came striding in, with a whole river of sunshine keeping it company, and then—well, Si would never have believed it, for all the Mrs. Vrooman he knew must have gone somewhere else. He would probably have recognized Katie, and he would have said, also:

"The captain hasn't changed a hair since his last trip, but I guess she's glad to see him home again."

A broad-shouldered, brawny, sunburned man, of middle height, with short, black hair, curling close to his head, and with a splendid black beard, Captain Vrooman looked just about the man to handle a a ship or a ship's crew.

Si Moore, out on the Sound, in the "Sea Lion," did

not look so at all. He sat at his tiller, watching the sail and the waves, with an air of a skipper all but crushed by a sense of his responsibilities. His passengers, after a long fit of exultation over their escape, were weary of tacking back and forth, and perhaps they had used up all their questions, for they were not asking any more. They were nervous, too, at the roughness of the water, and at the way Si let the "Sea Lion" lean over, and they did not exactly trust his seamanship. Part of this consisted in now and then requesting them to sit still.

"We could have run to Puttogue in an hour," he told them, "if the wind had been right. The boat you lost? Oh, that'll be picked up and sent home, I guess. But you'll have to pay something."

Every now and then he exchanged glances with Tom, and at last the answer was thoughtlessly spoken out:

"Tell you what, Si, we must try and reach Puttogue Point on this tack. If she should go over out here they'd all drown."

"Oh! oh!" came from Belle and her cousins, and Mrs. Bronson asked, calmly:

"Is there any danger?"

"Too much wind, ma'am," said Si. "I'm glad we've so many on board. It kind o' ballasts her."

"We will sit very still," said the other lady, with

dignity, whom he had learned to call Miss Keyser. "But you should have told us. Oh! must you tack again?"

"Now!" said Si. "Steady, ma'am! Oh, ain't I glad we've done it, Tom!"

"It was touch and go!" said Tom. "Just a little more and we'd have capsized."

The ladies turned pale and were silent, for the spray was flying in their faces and the "Sea Lion" was pitching badly.

"She doesn't leak a drop," said Tom, as a comment upon some water out of which his passengers were lifting their feet, "but there mustn't too much get in."

There was real danger, therefore, much more than any but the boys themselves were aware of. The sky was getting overcast and the horizon looked hazy. Was it possible that the "Sea Lion" had tacked for life and death and that she must get inside of Puttogue Point now or never?

The boy at the helm was only a boy, but there was a bright light in his keen gray eyes and his young lips seemed to harden. He was showing muscle, too, as well as coolness and skill, and one of Belle's cousins whispered to her:

"Why, isn't he handsome?"

"Guess he is," remarked Tom, sitting near her.

"He's the best fellow around our place. He can handle a boat too."

There was much in that, but there was beginning to be a great deal of wind with a darkening prospect of more to come.

Plunge, plunge, dip—on dashed the "Sea Lion," headed straight, but now and then careening perilously.

"That woman's praying, I guess," remarked Si, of Mrs. Bronson. "It's about as good a chance as she ever had, for how long this boat 'll stand it I don't know."

"There!" said Tom to himself. "Miss Keyser has shut her eyes again. I guess she doesn't like the look of things, and Si doesn't either. He knows."

Burley, bearded Captain Vrooman, sitting in the cosy parlor of his own home, after the long cruise of the "Wanderer," had indeed a great many questions to answer, but more of them came from his daughter than from his wife. The latter seemed to prefer looking at him, and he did a great deal of looking both at her and at Katie.

The fact that the "Wanderer" was what is called an "ocean tramp," and not a regular "liner," accounted for his visiting so many places with her, and his recent absence had been a pretty long one.

Then, when he could, he turned the tables on them,

and he proved himself a very good hand at asking about all things that had happened while he was at sea. The account they gave him went on and on until at last it reached yesterday and the fate of Squire Lander's windmill propeller.

"Why, the old crank!" exclaimed Captain Vrooman, springing to his feet. "He might have drowned you all——"

"He almost did," said Katie, and then her mother told about the life-preservers and the boys.

"Hurrah for them!" shouted Captain Vrooman, hugging his wife. "I don't know Tom, but I always liked Si. I must go and see him——"

"They went out fishing to-day," said Katie. "They were going to——"

"I'll see him, then, as soon as they get home," he said enthusiastically. "I want to do something for that boy."

"And for Tom," said Katie, "but, then, it was Si that handled the boat."

"Of course it was," replied the captain. "And I'll see old Lander and blow him up. Hang his life-preservers!"

"They did float us," said Mrs. Vrooman, and she had barely finished trying to explain the patent call-for-help when her husband cut her off, almost nervously:

"I don't care, Sarah!" he said. "I don't ever want you to risk yourself on the water. There's no danger for me, you know, but you're a woman. Come on! I want to look around the house, and around the place. I want to see everything. I don't want to hear any more."

Si and Tom, in the "Sea Lion," had been looking, looking, very earnestly at the sky and the sea.

"We're all getting dreadfully wet," remarked Miss Keyser, as more spray blew in and a wave dashed spitefully over the lee gunwale. "Si, are we in real danger?"

"Not yet, ma'am," said Si. "There! I can't go any nearer the wind! We're less than half a mile from the Point, and she's running like a racer."

"Yes, that's the Point," said Mrs. Bronson, and they all stared ahead, across the angry waves, at a low-lying, very rocky headland, along which there seemed to be a long line of white-headed breakers.

"Beyond that we'd be safe?" asked Belle.

"We could run into Puttogue Cove," said Si. "Almost smooth water there. This side the Point, though, there's no landing. All rocks and breakers. We'd be swamped, sure. The further point protects the harbor."

"We can't make it!" almost groaned Tom.

"Steady!" said Si, bracing against his tiller.

"We couldn't tack again, Tom. The wind's coming. Regular burst. See that!"

"Can't you—can't you get us in?" sobbed the youngest young lady. "Oh, I don't want to be drowned! This is dreadful!"

"Be calm, Sophia," said Belle, but Mrs. Bronson asked, in a tone of deep respect:

"Silas, what are you going to do?" for he was staring straight ahead as if he knew what he was doing, although his face had turned very pale before he flushed again.

"Mrs. Bronson," he said, "tell 'em to get a good ready! There's just one chance left. That's all——"

"What is it?" asked Miss Keyser. "I'm ready. I don't care what it is!"

"See that Point?" asked Si. "See those broken-up rocks? Not the big ones. I'm going to run her through the surf and beach her right there. If she goes in on a roller she may run away up. Anyhow, you stick to the boat till I holler, 'Jump!' Then you all scramble, for if you don't you'll be caught in the awfullest undertow!"

"Sure death!" murmured Mrs. Bronson: but Belle's prettiest cousin said to her:

"Mere boy? Why, Belle, he's a hero!"

"That's what I meant," whispered back Belle. "He's no boy!"

He was, however, and he was only able to attend to one thought at a time.

"Tom," he shouted, "be ready to let go the halliards!"

"Aye, aye!" shouted back Tom, like any old sailor, with perfect confidence in his captain. "When you say the word!"

"Not till you feel her strike, then," said Si. "I'm going to keep on sail till we beach her!"

"All right!" shouted Tom.

Hardly, indeed, could the "Sea Lion" bear her straining sail, as the increasing gust came roaring by, answering the crash of the breakers. Very nearly she went over, in spite of Si's skill in easing her, as she went in. A great wave lifted her, and its frothing crest poured angrily over her side, but Si's hands were firm and she drove right on.

"Oh, Si!" screamed Belle. "We're going——"

"We shall strike," gasped her nearest cousin.

Crash! Crack! Thump! A harsh, grating sound under all the boat—down went the splintered mast, a frightened cry burst from all the women.

"Jump!" shouted Si.

"For our lives! Jump!" added Mrs. Bronson, with the voice of a captain.

She did not hear him say, admiringly:

"We have not lost a thing," said Tom.

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"She couldn't have behaved better, if she'd been Mrs. Vrooman herself."

For all that, she was floundering and sprawling in the water, for a moment, before she could get a good hold of Miss Keyser and haul her ashore. The three younger women had been forward and they were out first, largely because they stood up, and the shock of the boat striking almost pitched them out.

"Now, Tom!" said Si, sturdily. "Get out, yourself. I'm coming——"

"So am I," said Tom, "but we mustn't lose our tackle and rods."

"No, sir!" replied Si, as he grappled for his own. "But those women are awful wet."

"We haven't lost a thing," said Tom, "but old Saunders's boat 's going to be knocked into splithereens."

"Guess so," said Si, wading ashore between waves, with his arms full, but right before him stood a group of five dripping women all crying and trying to shout "Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! I was afraid I couldn't do it," was what Si said.

CHAPTER VIII.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

When Captain Vrooman and his wife walked out of the house on their tour of inspection, to see how things looked, Katie darted away from them. She went straight to the boat-house and to the boat itself.

"He hasn't been here yet," she said, "but he will be. "It's all ready for him."

She did not utter a word of explanation as to what a steamship captain on shore could want of such a boat and crew as that. Just now her business was with something in its cargo. She leaned over the side and fished out a pretty large bundle, but it could not have been very heavy or she would not so quickly have carried it up the stairs and out upon the roof.

"Now for a tug!" she exclaimed. "I can do it! I know I can?"

It was quite an undertaking to go up the rope-ladder with that bundle held by one hand. It was

warm work, and her excited face grew very red before she reached the top and sat down with her bundle in her lap.

"I'll just get my breath first," she said, but her fingers were already busy with the halliards of the tall, slender flagstaff that stood up from the head of the spar which supported the "top."

She knew how to hitch bunting, for she was a sailor's daughter, and it was only a minute or so before she was straining, hand over hand, upon the halliards.

Captain Vrooman and his wife had gone out at the front door, and he had paused a moment, on the stoop, to stare around him.

"The place looks better than ever," he said. "How well you keep it up! Right, tight and tidy! You're a jewel! How everything has grown! There hasn't been any change over yonder, though."

"Mr. Moore says he's been having pretty good luck," she said, but all her face was beaming and glowing.

Nothing he was looking at, inside of his own fence and including the fence, but had been trained, disciplined, uniformed, cut up, cut down, 'tended, watered and all that sort of thing, in the hope that he would come, as he had now come, and see it and be glad of it.

"Sarah!" he said, but they were turning the house-corner and she looked up.

"Oh, Sam! Look at Katie!" burst from her, and he broke out into one of his great, hearty, happy laughs.

"She's going to tell 'em the captain 's on board," he said. "Hurrah for Katie!"

She had sent her flag to the very peak, and the wind was fluttering it out as if it loved to spread the most beautiful banner on earth.

"Isn't it beautiful!" said Mrs. Vrooman. "Seems to me it never looked so beautiful before. But, then, it does mean so much!"

That was so, for the Stars and Stripes stand for a great deal, at any time, but just now they read:

"Captain Sam Vrooman 's home again!" by every eye that saw the banner above his boat-house.

Katie was only a minute or so in hitching her halliards securely, and then down she came, for she, too, had matters and things, in the garden and elsewhere, which had been growing and getting ready for the end of the "Wanderer's" long cruise.

That iron ocean tramp might some day put to sea again, but Si and Tom were standing on Puttogue Point and staring at the "Sea Lion" as the pitiless surges bumped her heavily upon the rocks.

"She won't be worth a cent!" said Tom.

"She was pretty old, anyhow," replied Si, "and she's breaking all to pieces."

There was something very sad about it, anyhow, and she was all the boat they had. Tom was justified in remarking:

"It's just rough, I say!"

"Guess it is!" said Si. "But she never could have rounded the Point. If I'd tried another tack we'd have struck this gust and drowned every soul of 'em. I kind o' saw it coming."

It was a gust, indeed, and the low rolls of thunder which had been distant were coming very near now. Every one of the women who were for a moment grouped on the knoll at the Point had said something about hurrying home before the storm got to them, but it was Mrs. Bronson who added:

"Guess rain wouldn't make us any wetter, boys!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Si.

"We must hurry! Never mind your boat. Come to the Puttogue Beach House. I want to see you as soon as I can get on dry things."

"You'd better hurry along, Mrs. Bronson," said Tom. "It's going to be the crackinest kind of a thunder-storm. We're awful glad you got ashore."

"So sorry about your boat," said Belle, and it seemed to Si as if the cousins and Miss Keyser were

also saying it, but all he could think of to reply was :

"I'm right down sure I'm not to blame. She was taking in water all the while, and if I'd have tacked in that gust she'd have gone right over. I didn't dare try——"

"Why, you dear, brave fellow!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Bronson. "No grown man could have done more than you did. Come along, girls, we must be cutting a pretty figure."

"I don't care!" said Miss Keyser. "I don't know what to say to those boys. Boys, I'll see you again!"

A big first drop of the coming rain struck her right on the chin at that moment, and all the others must also have been hit, for they turned away at once and walked across the summer-burnt pasture grass toward the Puttogue road as fast as women could walk with wet skirts.

"Si," said Tom, "we've got everything. Let's put for home! You don't mean to follow them to that hotel, do you?"

"Hotel!" exclaimed Si, as if something awful had scared him. "More'n two hundred people! Maybe more! Most of 'em—I heard 'em say there wasn't any men, this year. How'd you like to face a hundred women?"

"Soaking wet, too," said Tom. "That's what I was thinking. Hullo! There's a wagon going our way. Come on!"

"I saw it," said Si. "We'll get there. It's old Sampson. He was coming up here with a load o' hay for the hotel."

The very mention of that concern seemed to spur them, but the five women were already well ahead and were no longer paying them any attention. The most important question in their minds at that moment was the quickest way of getting to the hotel, and they probably could not have suspected the boys of any other purpose.

The shore road was there, however, and it was a quicker cut to Vrooman 's Cove or to Eastwood than the voyage by way of Foam Island; but there were several miles of it, and both Si and Tom felt that walking in wet clothing was very much like hard work. It was also a short cut straight across from the Point where the "Sea Lion" was bumping, to the road, and they reached a gap in the fence just before a large wagon carrying an empty hay-rack came slowly trundling along.

"Hullo, Mr. Sampson," shouted Si. "Will you take us to the Cove?"

"Get in! Get in!" growled a harsh voice from the front of the wagon. "You look like drownded

rats. I'm driving for the Puller sheds 'fore them clouds burst."

He pulled up his bony gray span and the boys climbed into the wagon, but if they were to reach any sheds before the rain did there was trotting to be done by the grays.

Even a thunder storm does not strike everything at once, and there was still blue sky to be seen from Eastwood. It had been just before Katie Vrooman started down the rope-ladder that her father and mother, in the front yard, felt so very patriotic about her and her flag. She was still pulling on the halliards and looking up, when the captain laughed loudly and exclaimed :

"Look at her ! Isn't that worth coming home for ? She's the prettiest girl I ever saw ! "

Perhaps that meant that she was his own girl, but when she came down and walked around the garden, with him and her mother, she could have pointed at a potato plant and it would have looked to him like an extraordinary tulip. It was while she was showing him some of her gardening that Mr. Moore went suddenly into his kitchen and through it, and upstairs, and shouted ;

"Martha ! Martha ! Captain Vrooman's got home. Their flag's up ! "

She was looking out of a front window at that moment, and she responded :

"Don't I know it ! Can't I see the flag ! What I'm worried about is Si. There's an awful storm coming. I don't want him disappointed in his fishing, like he was yesterday. His new tackle, too !"

"That's a fact," said Mr. Moore. "I noticed about the storm. He may have good luck though——"

"I'm afraid he'll get soaked," she said.

"It won't hurt him, if he don't have any worse luck than that," replied the husband. "They can shelter on the wreck."

Away at the other end of Eastwood village there was a faint smoke creeping out of the Lander shop chimney. Down in the shop, by a vise that held something shining that he was filing, the inventor himself was looking intently at his work and remarking :

"This is wonderful ! wonderful ! Biggest invention of the age, if I only knew how it was done, so I could do it again. I must go over and show it to Si. He was here when I did it. I declare ! Was that thunder ? Hark ! Yes, sir ! There's a storm coming ! Hear 'em ring ?"

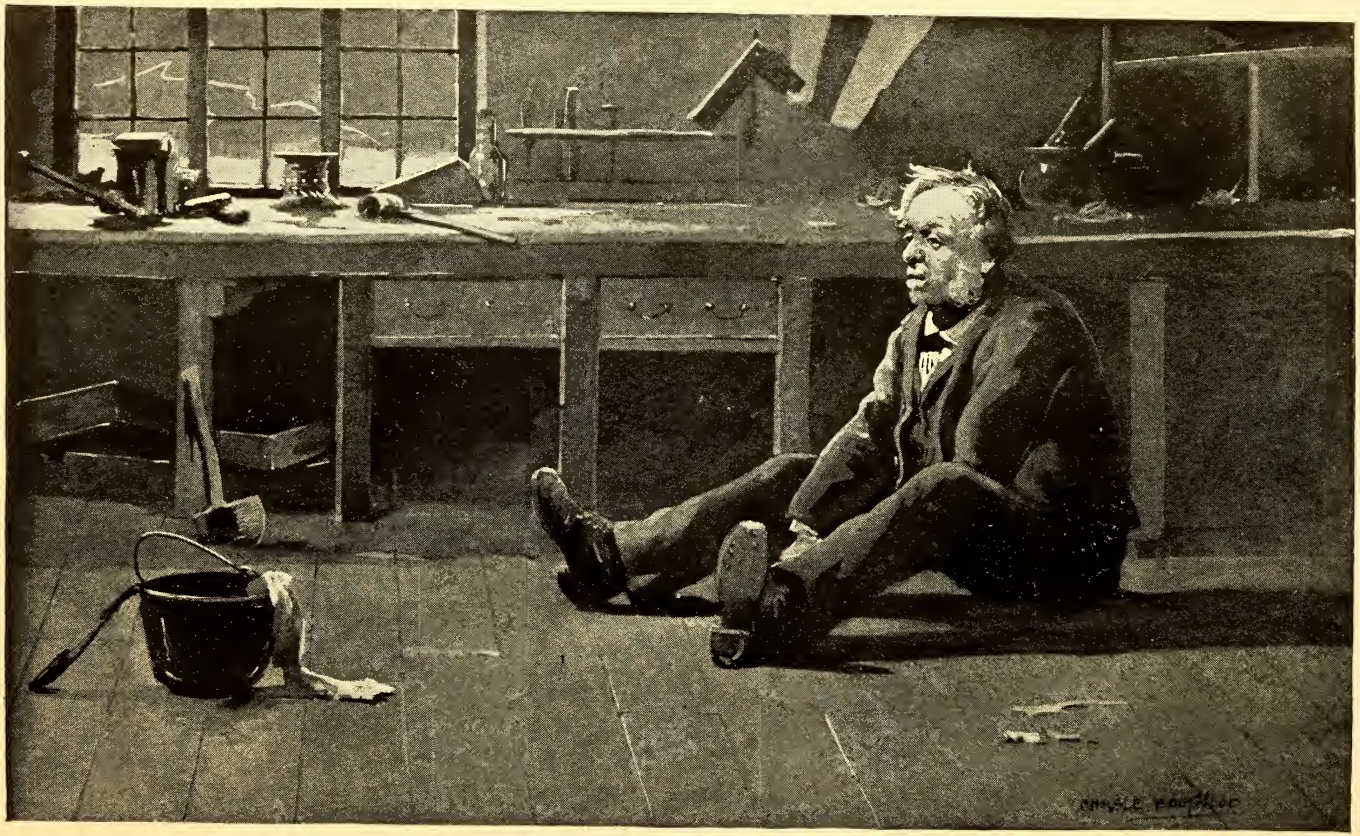
The shop was indeed full of the sound of clanging bells—tinkling rather than clanging, if it had not

been for the spasmodic way in which they sounded. It was as if some pretty vigorous fellow gave a jerk, let go, and then jerked again ; but Squire Lander had dropped the bit of yellowish metal he had been so excited over. Whether or not it was a wonder, the biggest thing of the age, there it lay, while he leaned over a common "ticker" telegraphic instrument, next door to the upright case that held his bells. A long strip of paper was running slowly out, in the ordinary way, only rapidly.

"There!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "There it goes! I'm glad I wasn't any nearer. It got the whole force of that stroke."

He was sitting down on the floor of the shop as he spoke. All the country around Eastwood was listening to an uncommonly loud peal of thunder which had followed a vivid flash of lightning, and his telegraphic machinery lay scattered all over the floor, while the bells had surely gone insane. The shop, too, seemed to smell of sulphur, and it looked to Squire Lander as if a vicious ball of blue fire traveled along the work bench to the forge.

Flash! Crash! Lightning and thunder so closely arm in arm that the thunder seemed to come first, while the blue fire shot up the chimney and a dozen or so of the bricks that had been at the top



Squire Lander was sitting on the floor.

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of it came rattling down as if frightened off their perch by so much thunder-storm.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Squire Lander. "I'd set a trap to catch that storm current, but I didn't expect so much. I can't go to find Si, though, till the storm's over," and he added, as he stood up, leaned forward and looked: "My soul! The ticker is knocked all to pieces! I'll have to get a new one. You can't exactly hope to regulate a stroke of lightning."

The look of things in his shop, especially around his electrical machinery, was in favor of that idea, but all the rest of that seashore neighborhood only knew, as they said:

"That's it! What a clap o' thunder! The storm's got here!"

Mrs. Vrooman herself turned from explaining to her husband the improvements in the hen-coop, which had enabled her to succeed so very well with ducks, and exclaimed, as the squire did:

"Thunder! Let's go into the house!"

"There's a squall coming, Sally," he laughed. "It won't hurt the ducks, but I guess you and I and Katie had better get under hatches. I'd kind o' like to know how it seems to be on shore in a gale. I've almost forgotten. Katie, does the house

roll and pitch much, or is it steady? The 'Wanderer' 's as steady as a clock——"

"Sam!" exclaimed his wife. "I've always gone to sleep when we had stormy nights here. I felt so safe about you."

"She's a right good ship," he began, but she interrupted him.

"That isn't it, Sam," she said. "If it stormed here, I knew it wasn't storming where you were. No storm could work on both sides of the earth at the same time."

"Oh," he said. "That's it. Well, I s'pose any storm 'd thin out if you spread it wide enough. I've been in some, though, that seemed to be all gathered into one spot. Hullo! There she comes! That's a regular South Sea flash, and there's another just behind it, trying to catch up. Run, Katie! 'Tisn't every girl that can outrun a flash o' lightning."

He was evidently feeling good all over, and Mrs. Vrooman exclaimed, just after that clap of thunder:

"Let's go into the house. I want you to hear how Katie has improved in her music. She's been practicing a whole lot of things for you——"

"Let her play 'em all!" he whispered back, and then something or other made him laugh, laugh, laugh his way into the house.

The storm had come, indeed, and it was just when Squire Lander arose and stretched himself and remarked, cheerfully: "I didn't get so very severe a shock, after all!" that a group of excited women, wet and dry, were gathered in a piazza of a very, very long wooden palace, with many colored awnings over all its windows, and the dry-clad women were reiterating to the wet ones:

"Shocking! Shocking! Oh, if you had all been drowned, how shocking it would have been! What a shock it must have been to you, anyhow!"

"Not a bit of it!" responded Mrs. Bronson. "But those boys! Their boat 's ruined. When they come in don't let them go till we've seen them, Mr. Potter."

"All right, madame," dryly remarked the neatly-dressed man she spoke to. "They're shore boys—they'll come. They'll stay, too, till they're paid for their boat. You needn't worry about them!"

No doubt but what that was the way he felt about it, knowing all that a hotel man could know about shore boys. But Si and Tom and Mr. Sampson were just then under a shed, nearly a mile down the road from the Point, and Si was remarking to Tom, after Mr. Sampson had heard all they could tell him of their Foam Island adventure:

"Tom, don't you think Mrs. Bronson looks like

Mrs. Vrooman? Oh, but ain't I glad we got away as easy as we did!"

The peculiarity of thunder-storms is that they cannot keep it up for any length of time, and Captain Vrooman had to say so to Katie, shortly after Mrs. Vrooman made her sit down at the piano.

"I'll just wait till it stops thundering," answered Katie, for the recurrent roll and peal and rattle were altogether out of tune with the music she was playing, and she had thought, again and again: "I couldn't sing, if I should try."

"It won't last long," he said, and he was right, for the wind was busy with the clouds, and there was a streak of blue sky creeping up from the horizon at the moment when Mr. Sampson backed his team out of the shed and remarked:

"Now for the Cove, boys, and what you'll say to old Saunders about that boat o' his'n I don't know. She'll never float again."

"Guess she won't," sighed Tom. "But Si can see him about it."

"No fish to take home, either," added Si. "It's been a pretty rough day."

"I should say it had," growled Mr. Sampson, staring at his team and blowing his cheeks out very full. "But just wait till you see Saunders! He

thought a great deal o' that boat. He'd owned her ever since she was built, and he was quite a young man then."

"Guess he must have been," said Si.

Mr. Sampson's face drew down to a somewhat gloomy length over what he thought about the Saunders' boat, but he drove on steadily homeward. The piano in the parlor of the Vrooman place was beginning to work upon cheerful music, however, and the sun had come out gayly, although somewhat low down on the western side of the sky, when the wheels of the empty hay-wagon splashed through the freshly-made mud of the shore road through the Cove.

"Boys! Hullo!" almost roared a deep bass voice at the roadside, and Mr. Sampson pulled in his team at once, remarking:

"There's Saunders! Now you'll catch it!"

"Si," demanded a large, weighty-looking man, with very red hair and beard, as he swung himself to the side of the wagon, "what have you done with my boat?"

"She's gone all to bits on Puttogue Point," replied Si. "I couldn't have tacked around the Point in that gust——"

"Wrecked her have you?"

"I'll tell you how it was, Saunders," interposed

Mr. Sampson. "They let a lot of city girls manage the boat——"

"No, I didn't," said Si. "I steered her myself. 'Twasn't Tom's fault, either. I beached her on purpose. Only way to get 'em ashore."

"He drowned 'em to save 'em," explained Mr. Sampson, and he gave a rapid sketch of the Foam Island business, with improvements of his own making, which seemed to lay the blame of the storm, if not of Foam Island itself, upon Si's shoulders, while the nigh gray horse turned his long head and winked at Saunders.

"It's worse than the Lander business," growled Saunders, savagely, winking back at the gray. "Now, Si, you and Tom go home. I'll see your father about this. It's twice running, and it won't do. Old Captain Vrooman, he's home. Their flag's up. I'm going to see him now, and I can't stop to talk, but you've got to pay me a thousand dollars for that boat. She was just calked, and I was going to paint her, and cushion her, and put a new sail on, and a flag. You'd no business to get into so much mischief. It's just like you and Tom."

Tom had already dropped out of the wagon on the opposite side.

"Si," he said, "hand me my rod and tackle and I'll streak it. You can tell him all there is to tell."

"Don't get out yet, Si," said Mr. Sampson. "I'll land you at the top o' the hill. Did you say the Captain was home, Saunders? Why, he doesn't want to see you, not right away. I'd want you to hold off till to-morrow, if 'twas me."

"Well," drawled Saunders, "now I've lost my boat, I'll wait a little. May be he'll let me have his'n. But I don't lend any more boats to boys that can't go fishing without drowning a lot of women. It beats all! I never drowned anybody myself."

"Nor I, either," responded Mr. Sampson, blowing out his cheeks. "The least you can do is to make them pay twice for the boat. Splendid boat she was, too. Ripper to go. I'd hate to lose a boat like that——"

"Well!" exclaimed Si, recovering himself a little, as the team and wagon started, "all there is left of her is stuck on Puttogue Point rocks, and I just had to beach her!"

"Guess he did!" chuckled Saunders, as he swung himself away. "'Twasn't all luck. There's the making of the pluckiest kind of man in Si Moore! Tom, too!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE CREW IN THE BOAT.

PERHAPS Captain Vrooman was not the happiest man in all the world as he sat in his own home parlor listening to Katie's music, but he certainly belonged in the front row. So did Mrs. Vrooman, and she was able to whisper to him, between two pieces, after he had admired the first and was squaring himself to admire the next :

"Polly Jones is in the kitchen, Sam. She'll tend to things. I agreed with her to come over as soon as she saw the flag. I don't mean to do a thing so long as you're here. It's my vacation as much as 'tis Katie's."

"So it is mine," chuckled the captain. "The 'Wanderer' 's going into the dry dock for repairs, all through. I needn't go to look at her more'n twice a-week."

Katie was doing very well at the piano ; but the music she was making was nothing, somehow, to the music he seemed to be hearing. Very likely no

other performer on earth could have done as much for him, since Mrs. Vrooman herself did not play the piano.

At all events, the Vrooman family was entirely satisfied to be without visitors for the time being, and was living in an exceedingly pleasant little world of its own.

Another and much larger crowd of people were living in a great seaside hotel, and these, for the greater part, waited impatiently for the reappearance of five women who had been cast away on a desert island and afterward wrecked and drowned, but who were supposed to be getting dry before coming out of their rooms to tell how it all happened. That may have been partly so, but the first utterances heard, after Mrs. Bronson and the others became visible, were :

"Where are those boys ?"

"We told them to wait !"

"Mr. Potter, didn't you say they would stay until we could see them ?"

"See them ?" exclaimed the hotel proprietor. "Why, madam, there haven't been any boys here. Are you sure they got ashore ?"

"Of course they did !" said Miss Keyser.

"Then they'll come to-morrow——"

"No, they won't, Mr. Potter," said Mrs. Bron-

son, "I do believe that boy Si went straight to Vrooman's Cove! I never saw such a bashful——"

"Bashful? Yes," exclaimed Belle, "but he and Tom are splendid——"

"I don't care," said Mrs. Bronson. "We'll drive over there to-morrow and hunt them up."

"I guess you needn't," said Mr. Potter, confidently. "At least, somebody or other 'll be after you about that boat."

They all agreed that it was too late to do anything that day, for the sun was getting down as low as he could so as to look under any clouds that might linger after the storm, and Vrooman's Cove was a pretty long drive from the Puttogue Beach House. At all events, the people in the latter had something interesting to think and talk about, and so had Squire Lander and his wife and daughter. Mrs. Lander and Margaret hardly waited for the rain to stop before they hurried to the shop to tell him what an awful thunder-storm there had been. They found him standing before what had been a telegraph machine, and he was evidently thinking hard, for he held in his hand a long strip of paper printed with letters such as run from any ticker.

"That's it!" he said. "Look at that, Huldah! Maggie, did you ever read a message from a streak of lightning? There's one."

"There isn't anything in it," replied Maggie, almost scornfully.

"No," said her father, "lightning can't spell worth a cent, but it can punctuate. That machine 'll need repairing. Hullo! there's one thing I didn't think of!"

He turned from them and stepped away to another corner of the shop and stared thoughtfully into what looked like a flower-pot, full of dry road-dust.

"I declare!" he gasped. "I'll bury that. If the lightning had struck that jar of pugnite there wouldn't have been a grease-spot left of this part of the country!"

Whatever he meant by that he did not explain, but he shortly added, with restored cheerfulness:

"Well, there won't be any more thunder and lightning to-day, but it's an awful warning. I won't make more than an ounce at a time. I must see Si, too. I think I know, now, what to do with some of it. I can blow up that place——"

Again he paused, and he gave no further idea of his intentions concerning Si, but it must have been of a deep and dangerous nature, for he seemed even glad to get away from the shop and go into the house. Mrs. Lander and Maggie were also afraid of that shop, and they breathed more freely after

they were outside, looking up at the chimney-top and declaring:

"Oh, yes! We can see!"

"Knocked the corner right off," he said. "Didn't the bricks rattle!"

"H-m-m!" shuddered Maggie, still staring upward. "The thunder did! Oh, I'm so afraid of thunder!"

Tom Clark, at his home, did not appear to have anything to be afraid of, for, after he had told his story twice, his mother said:

"Well, it was awful! Si Moore 'll see Saunders again about the boat. Si 's the oldest. 'Twasn't your fault."

"Guess it wasn't," said Tom, confidently, "and Saunders won't hurt him. Si can settle it."

The crew of the wrecked "Sea Lion" had still unbounded confidence in her captain as to anything that had been or that was to come. Tom would have gone to sea with Si again that hour, even if he knew that Si was going to beach the boat on Puttogue Point. Si, on the other hand, had less and less confidence in himself, as Mr. Sampson's gray span climbed the hill. They did not go all the way up, for the Sampson place was next to the Moore place, and the house was below the ridge at the curve of the road.

"I'll go in as far as the barn," said Si, "and cut across lots to our house."

"I would if I were you," said Mr. Sampson, grimly. "You've done enough for one day."

"Glad that dog's tied up," was the best reply Si could think of, but Mr. Sampson said,

"Well, he isn't glad about it!"

Glad? No. That huge yellow mastiff was furious. He was tethered at the end of about twenty feet of rope and chain, and he was bounding hither and thither as if in desperate determination to break loose and eat up any intruder upon his own domain or his master's wagon.

"Tige never did like me," said Si.

"He never liked anybody," said Mr. Sampson. "I don't want him to. That's what keeps the place safe while I'm gone. Now you keep out of his reach and cut it home!"

Bound, yelp, bark, everything but scream with wrath, were the tokens of Tige's state of mind, while Si got out of the wagon and hurried toward his own fence, carrying his fine new fishing gear and no fish to show for them.

"He'll break loose some day," said Si, as he paused on the fence, "and he'll do mischief. Mother says it's just like an old bachelor to keep such a dog. But, oh, how I hate to tell her about this thing!

She did want a good string of fish. All about the boat, too!"

Away behind him, in Mr. Sampson's barnyard, Tiger was taking a rest from barking to fawn and whine around his master, while that grim, hard-mouthed person seemed to be asking him:

"What will he ever be good for? What are boys good for, anyhow? I don't want any 'round my place. Yes, Si 's as likely a boy as there is around the Cove, but there won't be much of anything for him to do. He won't be worth a cent, either. He's too ambitious."

What he meant by all that had no explanation whatever, unless Tiger understood it; but Si himself had now almost reached his own kitchen door and was walking a little slowly when he was hailed with:

"Where are your fish, Si?"

"Why, mother, we didn't get any——"

"Oh, Si!" she began, but before she could say more than that he was assailed from behind by another criticism:

"No fish? No luck at all? Gone all day, too! Didn't they bite?"

"Why, father," said Si, dolefully, "I was just going to tell mother about it, how it all happened. I had to beach our boat on Puttogue Point. Smashed her all to bits, but the women got ashore. Didn't

drown one of them, but they got a good ducking, and then Tom and I came home in Sampson's wagon."

"Silas!" exclaimed his mother. "Do tell how it was. You lost all your fish."

"Didn't catch any. They were ashore on Foam Island."

"But, Si," again interrupted Mr. Moore, "Captain Vrooman's home. The flag's up."

Si's face brightened at once, and there was a kind of magic in the news, for he had no more trouble in telling about the wreck of the "Sea Lion." Not even when his mother walked out of the house and hugged him and kissed him, and his father remarked:

"What luck! No fish, either, Saunders! Humph! Leaky old tub!"

"I'm going over to see the captain," said Si, "soon's I've done my chores."

"No, you won't," said his mother. "Mrs. Vrooman won't want you there before to-morrow. He's just come. You can stay at home for one evening."

"I haven't seen him myself, yet," said Mr. Moore. "Guess nobody has. He's all right, though. Guess he's made another lucky voyage. He 'most always does."

"But he's been wrecked, more'n once," said Si.

"Wish I could see him without seeing any one else."

At all events, he felt more like attending to his chores, now the fish-question was disposed of, although more than once he asked, a little anxiously :

"What on earth will Tom and I do for a boat?"

That was a pretty serious question for a pair of shore boys in midsummer with all the sea and the season before them. Tom Clark felt it keenly, for a while, but he relieved himself by his strong faith that, "Si 'll find another somehow. You see if he doesn't. Hope she'll be a good one."

So that day closed, for there was little or nothing left to happen around Vrooman's Cove, or in Eastwood, or even about Puttogue Point. The remains of the "Sea Lion" lay there, wedged in among the rocks, with the waves washing into her through a great hole in her larboard side. She was a very complete wreck, without anybody to visit her until after supper. Then she sat and let herself be admired by a swarm of strollers from the Beach House, some of whom did not get back to the hotel until long after the moon was up. Belle and her cousins were among them, and they highly praised the performance of the "Sea Lion," but that craft was beyond profiting by praise or fame. She would never rescue anybody any more.

Si was quite satisfied to remain at home and let his mother make him tell, an inch at a time, all there was to tell about his cruise to Puttogue by way of Foam Island. After that it was such a quiet, sleepy night, with hardly a mosquito to hear from. It was followed by one of the finest mornings that ever landed at Vrooman's Cove, and one of the first to know how fine it was was Katie herself. She was out in the garden to look at the plants, of all sorts, with the sun, and then was in the kitchen an hour ahead of Polly Jones, busying around without any particular business and wishing that her mother would come down to consult about breakfast.

"But," said Katie, "she mustn't touch a thing about the house while father's here. I suppose he won't be up for ever so long."

That was what Si had supposed, when he slipped downstairs so quietly, remarking:

"I'll get everything 'tended to good and early. If I don't see Captain Vrooman, though, and get a yarn out of him!"

That was what Katie and her mother had been doing all the previous evening, except when Katie was at the piano, but it was not any hope of hearing yarns right away that carried Si down to the roadgate so long before breakfast.

There was the Vrooman house, however, across the road, and there was the bright, beautiful flag, fluttering in the breeze at the top of the trim flag-staff. The flag may have beckoned him, for he slowly walked over, thinking aloud :

"None of 'em up, I guess. He'll sleep pretty late and rest himself the first morning at home after so long a voyage."

The gate stood open and in walked Si, but his feet or some other force took him along the oyster-shell walk to the left. Even the door of the boat-house was open, and he could hardly have helped looking in at the shelves and the curiosities. They were all there. So was the boat, too, but Si choked down an exclamation and only thought it :

"If there isn't the captain, sitting in the stern, with his hand on the tiller. He's reading, too ! What's he reading ?"

There sat the burly sea-captain, with a broad-brimmed tarpaulin hat on his head and an open book in his hand, and there sat the crew, but they had a more alive look than usual. The captain's eyes were at that moment lifted from the book and he caught sight of Si in the door.

"Come in !" he shouted. "How are you, my boy ? Come right in ! I was coming over to see you. Want to see Tom, too."

"Didn't s'pose you'd be up," stammered Si.

"Up? Why, I always keep the morning watch, sea or land. Can't help it. I'd turn out of my bunk if I was dead. They told me all about Lander's upset. Bully for you."

"I didn't do anything," said Si.

"Yes, you did, Si, I felt it good and strong while I was sitting here. You didn't think I'd be here, with these fellows? Didn't I ever tell you 'bout this boat? Never mind now, but there are only six of the crew when I'm away."

Si was indeed staring at the boat and all that was in it, with a face that was fairly burning with suppressed curiosity.

Six of that boat crew, seven now, with the captain, and only one alive? Si had wondered, again and again, what it all meant, or if it meant anything, but he had never dared to ask Katie or Mrs. Vrooman. The village people all said it was only one of Captain Vrooman's queer collections and it wasn't half as interesting as his shells and things, but Si actually mustered courage to say:

"Guess there's a yarn about the boat, isn't there, Captain Vrooman?"

"Well, there is!" said the captain, seriously. "See those six, Si? That pair are Chinese coastmen. That's a man of all sorts. That's a Sandwich

Islander. The other two are Englishmen. I got some wire frames and some masks and wigs and clothes and things and set 'em up, after I brought the boat home. Had to put it here before I finished building over it. There they are, 'bout as they all used to sit. It's too long a yarn to spin before breakfast, but I'll tell you all about it, some day."

"Father?" called out the voice of Katie, at that moment from the sitting room. "Are you in there? Breakfast's 'most ready."

"Hush, Katie!" Si heard her mother say. "Let him alone. He always spends his morning watch at home in the boat."

"I didn't think he would."

"Don't go in, dear. What! is Si there? Well, he wanted to see Si."

"I'll go right home now, Captain," exclaimed Si. "Mother wants me. Yes, I wish you'd tell me all about it. I'm glad you got home safe. Good-morning."

He was off and he was safe beyond the gate before anybody thought of stopping him, for the captain was saying something to Katie, and Mrs. Vrooman's own face was appearing in the sitting-room door. As Si said: "You wouldn't have known her, she was just handsome."

He did not say anything at home about his

morning call at Captain Vrooman's, and even after breakfast he contented himself for awhile with almost anything he could find to do, and with assuring himself :

"Tom 'll come up to see me, I know he will."

It was more than an hour after Tom might reasonably have been expected to make his appearance, that an open carriage, jammed full of well-dressed women, pulled up in front of a large, red-haired, humorous-eyed man, at the side of the road through the Cove.

"Can you tell me, sir, where I can find a boy named Silas Moore ? I am Mrs. Bronson," said the most notable looking woman in the carriage.

"Oh, yes ! Mrs. Bronson. Sampson told me. You were in my boat when Si broke it up yesterday ?"

"We had to run ashore," more timidly interposed a short, thin woman behind Mrs. Bronson. "He steered——"

"I know he did," said Saunders, with some vigor. "Smashed it all up. He's got to pay for it, too. Run her right upon the rocks. You ought not to make him pay you anything, though. Not a cent."

"Why, Saunders !" exclaimed a deep, rich voice behind him. "I've just seen Sampson. He told me how it was. Si did just the right thing. I'd

ha' beached her, myself, if I'd ha' been there. He's a born seaman. Pluck! Grit!"

"Hurrah! Captain Vrooman!" shouted Saunders, swinging around to shake hands. "If I ain't glad to see ye! Knew you were home, too! I say, ma'am, did you hear him? He is a steamship captain. He knows. You haven't any right to find fault with Si, or with Tom, either. They wrecked the boat."

"Fault with Si?" echoed Mrs. Bronson, while all the faces in the carriage seemed to redden. "What do you mean? He saved our lives. I'll pay for your boat! How much was she worth?"

"'Bout fifteen dollars, after the boys calked her," replied Saunders, calmly. "You oughtn't to let him pay that. Then you spoiled his day's fishing, and you might allow him something for fish. If any fellow'd saved my life, I'd let him off——"

"Why, just hear him!" sprang spitefully from the lips of Belle herself back in the carriage. "We'd do anything for Si or Tom, either. We think they're splendid!"

"Shut up, Saunders," remarked Captain Vrooman. "I owe Si and Tom a new boat myself. Saved my wife, you know. I'll settle with Saunders, madame."

Mrs. Bronson's pocket-book was already out, and

she was selecting some bills when Saunders said to her :

"No, thank you, ma'am. I'd given the boys the boat. Tom lives down the road, yonder. Si lives in the first house over the hill, on the right. You'd better see Si. You won't do it, though—not if he knows you're coming. He'd run like a lamplighter !"

A peal of laughter burst from the lips of Belle's cousins, the driver joined in, and the rest had to follow. Captain Vrooman's hat had been off from his first arrival, and he was now in danger of losing all the dignity that belongs to a steamship skipper in the presence of a cargo of ladies.

"Humph !" exclaimed Mrs. Bronson. "Thank you, sir. Driver ! Drive on ! Good morning, gentlemen. Girls, this is absurd ! We'll go and find Si——"

"Guess they'll have to run him down," said Saunders. "Captain, how are you ?"

CHAPTER X.

THE SWAMP VOLCANO.

Poor Tom Clark was having dreadfully bad luck that forenoon. Just as he had picked out all the snarls in his fishing line, and felt ready to set out on a visit to the Moore place, he fell into a plot. It was one set going by some of his mother's boarders, including the slim young man who hired the garret room. They had planned a sailing party, had hired a boat, and had arranged with Mrs. Clark to have Tom go with them.

"I most wish Si was to steer," murmured Tom to himself, "and I could get him to run 'em ashore somewhere."

Nevertheless, he had to go, and so he was to know nothing that would happen that day, in the Cove or in Eastwood.

As for Si, he felt sure that if he went across the street again, too soon after breakfast, he would meet Mrs. Vrooman instead of the captain. That was one cause, that, and having so many things on his

mind, that carried him away back of the barns. He found himself inclined to imitate his father and "consider that matter," after he got there. He walked on, for quite a distance, across the long pasture field, to where it ceased to be pasture and was nothing but swamp and water.

"We'd have farm enough," he thought, "if it was only all land. It's just so with the farms all along shore, only this isn't salt-water swamp."

He was looking at it ever so thoughtfully, and and his eyes were as dreamy as if he were staring across the Sound, when a sharp-toned, cheerful voice hailed him with :

"Si, you out here? Glad you are. I came to take a look at something I saw here the other day."

"Good-morning, Squire Lander," replied Si, respectfully, "but there isn't anything here. Nothing but swamp."

"Oh, yes, there is," said the squire; "I'll show you. There's something more, too, I meant to show it to you at the shop, but I forgot it. The lightning knocked my telegraph apparatus to pieces, but I'm glad it didn't get a chance at this. There'd have been something worse than thunder."

Si's thought was: "I guess he's been inventing something else." But he only inquired :

"What was it? I saw pretty much everything."

"You wouldn't have known what it was," replied the inventor, taking out a papered parcel from one of his coat-pockets. "Come along with me, along the ridge. I'll show you. I saw it when I was here before."

Si went right along, with a kind of kindling up of all the curiosity that was in him, but he did not see anything worth while until Squire Lander halted on a low, solidly rocky place in the ridge.

"There," he said, pointing with his left hand. "The swamp slopes this way till it's a pond. The water is two or three feet deep, even in summer."

"Tiptop skating in winter," said Si, "but there are no fish in it—only frogs."

The rock they stood on was only about ten feet wide on top, and the squire pointed with his right hand, remarking:

"See how it slopes away across Sampson's land, toward the Cove? It's the ridge stops the water and makes the swamp. If the ridge were out of the way all the water would run to the sea."

"You can't take away the ridge, though," said Si, regretfully. "It's solid rock. Old Sampson doesn't want that pond let loose on his farm, either."

"It wouldn't stay there," replied the inventor; but he was absorbed in a study of something between

his feet, and he added : "See that crack, Si? I just want to know how deep it goes."

"You can't tell, I guess," said Si ; but the squire was pouring into the crack the dusty looking contents of the paper parcel.

"That's it," he said. "It's all gone. The fissure will hold more of it. That shows that it goes down deep."

"What is it?" asked Si, again.

"Don't you say a word to anybody," replied his enthusiastic friend, as he emptied another paper of dust into the crack. "I invented it myself, but I haven't had any chance to try it. I believe it is stronger than dynamite, or than any of the other explosives. Why, Silas, my boy, it isn't safe to make too much of that stuff. If enough of it should go off, all at once, it would blow the earth up."

"I don't want to be there when it goes off!" remarked Si, staring at the last grains as they disappeared down the crack.

"There!" exclaimed the squire. "It isn't full by any means. I must go back after more, and I'll bring my portable battery to touch it off with. I'll show you."

Si felt that he was getting excited, but his next remark was :

"Hear that dog! He's tied up out there by the

barn. Oh, but isn't he mad! He can see us and he thinks we're coming into Sampson's land."

"Good watch-dog," said the squire. "Glad he's tied up, though. Now you stay around the house, or over at the captain's to-day. I can't say just when I'll get back."

Mrs. Vrooman and Katie were at home, after the captain went down to the Cove to see how it looked, and to hunt up his old neighbors and friends along shore. Everybody there expected to see him pretty soon after his flag went up. They would hardly have liked it if he had gone through Eastwood, for what did the people up there know about sea-captains?

Mrs. Lander and Maggie had seen the flag, however, and they had recovered from the shock of the upset, for they were in Mrs. Vrooman's parlor only a few minutes after he went down the hill. They were there, therefore, when a carriage-load of women was pulled up at the gate, but they could not hear the debate going on in it as to which side of the road it should have stopped on.

"He said on the left-hand side——"

"No. I'm sure he pointed with his right——"

"That house is away back, anyhow."

"I believe he lives here. They said something about a flag."

"I was too mad to care what they said," exclaimed one of them, as she promptly got out. "I'll go in and ask. It's a pretty looking place."

All of them followed her through the gate and up the oyster-shell walk, but Katie had hurried to the door and reached it in time to meet Mrs. Bronson as she stepped upon the piazza and asked:

"Where's Si?—I mean, does a boy——"

"Si Moore?" exclaimed Katie. "Why, he lives over yonder."

There was a flush of vexation on Mrs. Bronson's face, and it flashed into Katie's mind that she was angry with Si, for some unreasonable reason. It was almost as if the neighborhood had been invaded, and Katie's black eyes had a quick light in them as she added:

"Mother 'll tell you all about Silas. He's the bravest, best kind of a boy. Mother?"

Mrs. Vrooman had heard and so had the Landers, and they were already coming.

"I want to find him," responded Mrs. Bronson, with energy. "He steered the boat for us yesterday, and we were all wrecked on Puttogue Point. We narrowly escaped drowning. My name is Bronson."

"I am Mrs. Vrooman!" came sharply over Katie's head at that moment. "I'll answer for Silas Moore.

If the boat was wrecked it could not have been his fault!"

"Neither does Mrs. Bronson think it was," put in a short, thin woman, excitedly, "but we want to find him and tell what we think of it. We can't let him go in this way."

"Did you ever! Of course we can't!" added Belle, and "I never heard anything like it!" came from one of her cousins. "We'll hunt for him till we find him. If it hadn't been for him——"

"Ladies," said Mrs. Lander, "you must be mistaken! Why, he saved all our lives only day before yesterday. That is, he and Mr. Lander's life-preservers, and I know the wind was going out of them. I could feel it go——"

"Mother," said Katie, "I don't care what they say. I want to know what Si says. He didn't let anybody up here know his boat was wrecked. He knows how to handle a boat——"

"Mrs. Vrooman!" almost angrily exclaimed Mrs. Bronson. "Let me speak!"

"Mrs. Bronson," very firmly responded the captain's wife, "Silas Moore's friends will stand right by him. 'Twasn't his fault——"

"Indeed it wasn't!" said Katie.

"Of course not," loudly whispered Maggie. "They're nothing but city women——"

"I didn't say it was his fault!" said Mrs. Bronson, quite loudly. "What I mean is he saved our lives! All five of us! And we want to pay him for his boat, too. It's all smashed up. Oh, dear me! Won't anybody understand us! Those stupid men at the foot of the hill! Where is Si?"

"Oh!" slowly returned Mrs. Vrooman. "Is that it? Do come right in and tell us all about it. Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say so. Come in, all of you. And then we'll go over to Mrs. Moore's together."

They all marched in, with a great deal of talking ready to be done, but it looked very badly for Si. When Squire Lander left him he stood for several minutes and studied the crack in the rock. Then he studied the pond and the swamp and considered how very much water there was there, and all the while Tige was doing his duty.

"How that dog can bark!" said Si, at last, as he walked away toward the house. "But I don't believe old Lander's pugnite 'll go off worth a cent. I mustn't tell that he's going to try it on, though, or all the village would come to see it done. There's father! I'll tell him. He knows a lot of things that Lander doesn't know. I guess."

Mr. Moore was not with his men, just then, and he listened with deep interest to all his son had to tell him.

"I've considered that matter more than once," he said, thoughtfully. "I don't believe he'll have any luck blasting that ridge, but it won't hurt anything to let him try. It's all on my ground and Sampson can't complain. But there's more water in that pond than old Lander thinks. It won't all run away through a crack."

Si left him and went on to the house. He was going in when he heard the bell clank-clankle, and he exclaimed:

"Somebody at the front door! Oh, dear, I'll go around! I don't want to see anybody——"

He may have had a fear or a suspicion that he was being hunted down, but he was at the further front corner of the house in a twinkling, peering through the honeysuckles at a throng on the piazza.

"There they are!" he said to himself. "If that isn't awful! All of them! And they've brought Mrs. Vrooman with them, and Mrs. Lander, and Miss Lander, and Katie. Mother's opened the door and they are going in. I heard Mrs. Vrooman say, 'Where's Si?' What'll I do? The cornfield? Father 'd find me there. No, I'll cut right across to Vrooman's! I know the place to hide in!"

Poor Si! It was a rash and remarkable thing

for him to think of or do, but then, he was desperate. He crossed the road quickly enough and darted into the boat-house, remarking :

"Last place in the world they'd think of, but I sha'n't have any telescope this time."

There were minutes and minutes of rapid explanations among the women in Mrs. Moore's parlor. There were vivid accounts of the cruise of the "Sea Lion" and the manner in which Si and the thunderstorm had sent her ashore upon Puttogue Point. Mr. Moore himself had been brought to the house by his deep thoughtfulness over the swamp and pugnite question, and he was, therefore, at hand when his wife came out to ask :

"Where's Si ?"

"Gone somewhere," he said. "I wasn't thinking of him. I was considering that ledge. It's too thick and solid for any kind of luck in trying to blast it——"

"But where is Si ?" she asked again, more vigorously. "All those women that he saved, from the Beach House, that he wrecked on the Point, when he ran them ashore——"

"Oh !" said Mr. Moore. "I'd like to see them. I did see Si set out on a run. He may have seen them coming——"

"If he did, it's the last of him," said his mother,

disappointedly, but she and her husband returned to the parlor.

They had a good time after they got there, and a proud woman was Mrs. Moore as she listened to all her visitors had to say about her son. They were exceedingly disappointed at not finding him at home, and tried hard to get his mother to send him to the Beach House, or to keep him in, some day, so that they could be sure of finding him. Mr. Moore said he would think the matter over, but his wife was seriously in doubt if they could ever induce Si to face those women again.

"Katie," whispered Mrs. Vrooman, "what is the matter with you?"

"Don't say anything, mother," whispered Katie. "Come to this window and look. There's Si. He's hiding!"

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Vrooman. "He's climbed into the 'top!' Scared half to death! No, I won't tell them. They'll see him some day. What a pity it is he's so bashful!"

So Katie and her mother enjoyed it all the better for having Si's secret to keep for him, but the captain came home to dinner and found the carriage from Puttogue only just ready to set out on its way home. It was just as well for Si that he did not hear the explanation between Mrs. Bronson and the

captain, for it contained several matters that would have set him thinking. As it was, he crouched low in the "top" and was glad there were such thick trees along the road. He knew they were there and he knew when the carriage drove away.

"Now's my time," he said to himself, and he started down the rope-ladder.

He had just reached the roof when he heard a half-laughing voice shouting up through the open hatch:

"Hullo! Aloft there! Come down into the cabin! Dinner's ready!"

Si came down, but he insisted on going home to dinner until the captain kindly let him off, saying:

"Go ashore, then. But I think I've heard of the right boat for you and Tom. She's up the coast a little way, but I've sent for her. She'll be along in a day or two."

Si went home in a kind of fever, but he had really escaped pretty well, and he could bear all that his father and mother had to tell him. It was much easier than it was to bear waiting, for a full hour, after dinner, before Squire Lander's buggy was driven in, away around to the barnyard, and he and Si and Mr. Moore unloaded it of one of the most mysterious pieces of machinery Si had ever seen.

"Portable battery," said the inventor. "Very powerful. I made it myself."

It was portable, but it took all three of them to carry it back to the edge of the swamp and put it in position.

"It won't do for us to go any nearer," remarked the squire. "But just hark to that dog! He is barking like mad!"

"Savagest animal along shore," said Mr. Moore. "Sampson ought not to keep him. He will do serious mischief some day. All such dogs ought to be shot!"

Squire Lander walked quickly on along the ledge, until he came to the crack, and his face grew quite red as he stooped over and began to pour in more of his wonderful dust.

"Deep!" he said. "Very deep. It'll hold all the pugnite I had on hand. I just know it'll work. Now I'll set the wires and rig the battery. Si, you and your father stay away off there by the machine!"

"All right," said Mr. Moore. "I've considered the matter. There's no danger to anybody, even if it should go off, and I don't suppose it will."

The now intensely excited inventor hurriedly arranged long parallel wires that led from the battery to a point in the middle of the crack in the

ledge. There they went down and disappeared. Si all the while had an idea that he was holding back the battery and keeping it from rushing in to hurt the ledge in some way. At the same time he was compelled to think of the rope and chain which were holding back Tige.

"Of all the howling, and barking, and jumping!" he muttered. "Hullo! Father! Squire Lander! Tige's broke loose! He's a-coming!"

"The unluckiest thing!" exclaimed Mr. Moore. "Savage brute! We're not on Sampson's farm. I declare! There he comes——"

"Quick, now—there—all's ready!" responded the inventor, hurrying back and taking hold of the battery. "We'll see, now. The dog? I hate dogs! Why, he is coming right after us! 'Tisn't any use to run! I'll explode it at him! What! The current is on! Won't it go off?"

Wild with rage from long confinement, and fiercely aroused by his sudden freedom, on dashed the furious mastiff only delayed by the necessity of finding a gap in a high fence. He found it, with a canine yell, and sprang forward, but it had compelled him to go beyond the loaded crack.

"Oh, what a disappointment!" began Squire Lander.

"Oh, that dog!" exclaimed Mr. Moore.

"Tige's coming!" shouted Si.

There may have been a hitch in the electric current, or a slow place in the pugnite, for a moment, but now there was a kind of puff in the air above the ridge, just after Tige cleared it with one of his long bounds. Another bound, yet another, and the ledge of rock seemed to rise behind him. Then the air was rent by a terrific, thunderous, roaring explosion. A great cloud of smoky dust went up, with flashes of fire, and away, above and around, in all directions, were hurled broken masses and fragments of granite.

"Hurrah!" shouted Squire Lander. "It worked."

"Guess it did!" said Si, breathlessly.

"It burst," began Mr. Moore, but he added, "and look at that dog!"

Yelp, yelp, yelp! Down went Tige's tail and then his ears, and with one dismayed glance back at that black and horrible volcano he ran forward, whining, until he could cower behind Si and lick his hand and look up into his face as if he were trying to say:

"Don't do it again! I didn't mean anything unneighborly by what I said. Please don't let that thing come after me."

"Poor Tige! Poor fellow!" said Si, patting

him. But when they all dashed forward to see what had been done by the pugnite, Tige hid himself behind the battery.

"There couldn't be any left?" asked Mr. Moore. "I was considering that matter."

"Left? Why, no," replied Squire Lander. "We have fired off all the pugnite there is in the world. But I invented it and I can make more when I want it."

"Look!" exclaimed Si. "Just look at that water run! Who'd have thought it! I wish Tom was here to see that!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE GARRET HIDING-PLACE.

THE Vrooman family had been among the earliest settlers of that region, or the outreaching rocks beyond the Cove would not have borne the name of Vrooman's Point. The shore road cut across behind the Point. Above the road, easterly, there was nothing of any consequence, excepting Sampson's farm, below the ridge, with the Moore place, with its swamp and water, behind it. Most of the Cove houses were along the shore road, westerly, but the road itself was a matter of continual interest to the people. It was in the habit of getting out of order, for much of it was built of sand that would not lie still unless it was wet, and hardly, even then. The thunder-storm had laid it down pretty smooth, so that it had been a pleasant drive for Mrs. Bronson and her friends, and they had returned to their hotel full of purpose to ride over it again and to find Si and Tom. Their carriages, however, had been jolted by one hollow that they

spoke of, severely, and a loaded wagon had been stuck in it that very day. It was a sort of wrinkle that came down under the fence from the back part of Sampson's land, across the road and down to a scollop in the beach of the Cove. So the road-master of Eastwood Township took the subject in hand and summoned the right kind of men to shovel sand while he stood up as engineer and showed them how much mending to do. Then a number of citizens, large and small, became interested deeply and gathered around to tell all they knew about roads, sand, mud, stuck wagons and the road tax. Some of them turned to look along the wrinkle, or hollow, as it crawled to the shore, and at the end of it they could see Saunders, with both hands in his pockets, looking seaward.

"Here they come," he was saying; "Tom Clark is steering. But what on earth are they back for, so early as this?"

There was a sail-boat coming in, and there was a pleasure party in it. They had had a splendid day for sailing and fishing, such as would have kept a shore-boy out as long as he could see to bait a hook, but here they were, steering straight for Saunders.

There were women on board, but they were all sitting still as if something had made them solemn, and the prow of the boat was occupied by a neatly-

dressed young man, who leaned forward, gazing sadly and anxiously at the shore.

Away up at the road all the workmen and spectators were waiting for a wheelbarrow that the engineer had forgotten. No more sand for the hollow could be had without that piece of machinery, and everybody was resting.

"Here we are, Mr. Saunders!" sang out Tom, as soon as he came within hailing distance. "I'll run her in, and you can haul her up and help 'em ashore."

"Did you have a good sail?" shouted back Saunders.

"Tip-top!" returned Tom, cheerfully. "But that there Mr. Elsenbacker, he took seasick and we had to bring him in. He's all right now."

He might be, but his face wore an exceedingly forlorn expression. The other faces in the boat were not by any means pitying him. On the contrary, they were discontented, or even spiteful, all but one, for Tom himself was steering cheerfully and was thinking:

"Ain't I glad he couldn't stand it! Now I'll get 'em ashore and go after Si! Hullo! What's that?"

Hundreds of people, around the Cove, up in Eastwood, out on the water, were at that moment dropping whatever they had in their hands and cutting

off any other thing they were talking about, to straighten up and say exactly what Tom did. A very large number of them added, as he did:

"I guess something's bust!"

Perhaps the blast sounded even louder to ears that had not been expecting it, such, for instance, as those of Tiger and the general public, than it did to the three operators who had been in charge of the electric battery.

They were now standing on the ledge and were looking down into something that was extraordinary.

"Who would have thought that it could have knocked out such a gap as that?" soberly inquired Mr. Moore. "Why, Lander, you've had the greatest kind of luck. It goes clean across the ridge!"

"Guess it's deep, too," remarked Si. "But just look at that water!"

"That was what I was hoping for," calmly responded the inventor. "It shows the enormous power of my pugnite. The crack was in the right direction, too. But I must be careful how I keep too much pugnite on hand."

"Oh, but isn't that a rush!" exclaimed Si, in great admiration, as he stared at what was going on before their eyes.

Only for one short moment after the explosion took place the pond seemed to stand still and hesitate. There had been a splash at the gap and there had been other spatters, large and small, where fragments of rock came down. Then, with a sudden impulse, the water started upon a new career. There was a desperate struggle to get there first, as all the liquid in Moore's swamp began to crowd its way toward the new outlet. The pressure to get out was tremendous, and it looked as if that entire pond had determined to go to sea.

"Complete success!" said Squire Lander. "What will old Sampson say?" more thoughtfully remarked Mr. Moore.

"Guess it's too late for him to say anything," said Si. "Let it go! Regular freshet!"

It was all of that, and there was slope enough to give the force of a sluice. Right across the plowed ground it plowed a furrow of its own, until it came to the old wrinkle. That hollow was a prize pathway for an escaped pond in a great hurry. On rushed the angry, muddy, foaming torrent, carrying a load of old rails, brushwood, stalks and rubbish, to hurl them all against the rickety road fence that refused to clear the track of its own accord.

The road-master, his workmen and his fellow-

citizens had turned from a deep calculation of how many wheelbarrow loads of sand it would take to mend the road. They were listening, too, for another explosion, if one was coming, but they had not yet decided, by any means, where the first one came from, when a yell from a boy near the fence seemed to summon them all in that direction. They were mostly hurrying along the hollow itself when the freshet struck the fence. Crash it went! Surging, foaming, roaring, on came the first gush of the success of Squire Lander's experiment. Away went the wheelbarrow. Down went the road-master. Over and over rolled several of his fellow-citizens. Up went a wild roar of shouts, yells, exclamations, cries for help, while on toward the sea poured a frantic torrent of old boards, dirty water and general confusion.

Tom was still in the sail-boat, fixing something, and Saunders had just helped ashore the last woman of the pleasure party. The slim young man was remarking:

"I think I begin to feel better, now I'm on land again. Water never affected me unpleasantly until to-day."

But the freshet had darted right across the bad place in the shore road. It had not been deep enough to drown anybody, but Saunders and the seasick

man, and one or two others, might almost as well have been at sea. Tom was the only person there who was entirely safe, and he at once exclaimed :

"Guess I know ! Old Lander's been inventing something ! Here it comes !"

So it did, and it did not at once cease coming ; but it would manifestly call for much sand to mend that road at the rate it was wearing away just now.

"Mr. Moore," said Squire Lander, at the gap, triumphantly, "it'll drain that whole swamp as dry as a bone ! But I must get my apparatus home, soon as I can. I want to go down to the shore, then, and find out about the outlet."

"That's so," said Si ; but there was a kind of fascination about that gap, and he left it regretfully.

"I've considered the matter," remarked his father. "There will not be any brook. It will run out, once for all."

A faint yelp, a very humble whine and a pleading, helpless expression of countenance greeted Si as he reached the machine. Perhaps it meant :

"Now, Si, you wouldn't throw another of those awful things at me, would you ?"

"Poor Tige !" replied Si. "Scared you half to death. Go home !"

No, he wouldn't go home. He would crouch along

behind Si, the only boy he knew who carried in his pockets that kind of awful racket. He even followed him into the kitchen, when Si went in to tell his mother what had become of the pond. Not that he was sure that he knew, exactly, and his next thought was helped by his father, as if they thought alike:

"Si," he said, "I don't care to go down to the Cove. I'd better be here, if Sampson comes, or anybody. You can go down and see what the water did, and come back and let us know."

"Just what I was going to do!" said Si.

Great had been the excitement among the people in the village who heard that explosion, and it was all the worse for being such a mystery. Some ran toward the post-office, some to the tavern, some to the drug-store, but a perfect swarm poured into Shaler's store, and not one among them could make a reasonable guess as to what it was that had blown up. At least a dozen had gone first for a look at the Lander place; but the noise had not come from that direction, and their first suspicions had to be set aside.

Captain Vrooman's first remark had been, when his wife exclaimed, "What's that?"

"Powder magazine!"

"There isn't any!" she said, but Katie at once

caught up the telescope and darted through the boat-house.

She was in the "top" by the time the freshet struck the fence, and her glass told her a great deal concerning the way in which it went across the road.

"Can you see anything?" called out the captain, from the hatch.

"Oh, do come up!" she said. "Something awful has happened! They all tumbled down! No, they're getting up again. There's a new river! I can see it run!"

"New river!" growled the captain, as he came up the rope-ladder. "Give me the glass! Where away?"

"At the Cove," said Katie, "along the road."

"I declare!" he exclaimed, after a moment of skillful searching through the glass. "I'm going right down there. The Moore pond has broken loose. I can see that. It's old Lander's work. I know it is!"

The best work of the freshet from Moore's pond was done in its first dash, and its force was spent. Like the pugnite, it was only an explosion, and it could not keep it up or do it again. The tumbled-down citizens, including the road-master, had only to pick themselves up, but the seasick young man

was heard to say that he wished he had remained in the boat a little longer.

Tom Clark was a boy who stuck to his purposes, for he hitched the boat while Saunders was still wondering how he came to sit down so suddenly, and he set out on a run to find Si. He did not have to climb the hill, for Si met him half-way, and only a few rods behind them was the captain.

"Si!" shouted Tom, "what's bust?"

"Our swamp!" shouted back Si. "Old Lander chucked a crack with pugnite and electrified it! The whole ridge went off like a double-header!"

"That's what I wanted to know!" said Captain Vrooman. "That's all right. Did he drown anybody?"

"No, he didn't," said Tom, "but they're awful mad and wet, and there's a hole across the road, and they've all gone to see where the freshet came from."

That was a fact. The most natural first thought of every man in the road had been to get over Sampson's fence and follow along the newly-invented water-course to the spring it came from. It was not far to go, and even now a pretty good crowd was gathered on the ridge, staring into the gap and listening to the chorus raised by all the frogs who

had so suddenly been robbed of about all the swamp they had.

Some of the men were remarking as Tom did :

"Sampson's gone over to Puttogue again, but, oh, won't he be mad when he gets back !"

They could not add, as he did, however :

"Hullo, Si, that's Sampson's awful dog. Ain't you afraid of him ?"

"What, Tige ? Why, no. He came pretty near being blown up, and he hasn't got over it. He just sticks to me."

"Guess the 'lectricity shocked him," said Tom. "But it must have been awful ! The noise rocked our boat !"

No doubt something did ; but Si had learned about all he had come for, and he and the captain were ready to go home. So was Tom, and they all went, but Si, in particular, felt like being in a hurry.

"I guess father 'll want to know what the freshet did," he said, as he reached his own gate and raced around the house.

The men at the gap in the ridge were forming ideas of their own, but most of them wanted more.

"Boys," said the road-master to his men, "come on ! We must tinker that road. If that ditch isn't filled up, there can't a team pass. The water's

going to run out and stop running. I know how to fix it."

Perhaps he did, but only the men who were going to get pay went with him. All his other fellow-citizens agreed, with one accord, with Mr. Saunders.

"I'm going to the house to see Mr. Moore," he said, decidedly. "This here is a mighty curious piece of business!"

Si had already reached it, and hardly had he told what Tom had told him before his father seemed to know just what Saunders and the rest would do.

"I think I will go to the village at once," he remarked. "Perhaps I will see Lander. I don't care to be here when they come——"

"Tom said they were pretty mad," said Si.

"I'm going over to see Mrs. Vrooman," exclaimed his mother. "I haven't had a word with the captain since he came home. Si, you can stay and take care of the house!"

They were gone almost before he knew it, and it did not take half a minute for Si to find out that he did not feel able to explain the pugnite business.

"I'll shut the door, anyhow," he said, "and bolt it. They won't find anybody at home. I don't want to talk with any of 'em until they get dry again. They're mad now."

He was considering that matter, just like his

father, at the very moment when the road-master and his helpers set out to mend the road, while nearly all the rest began to march toward the house.

"That's it!" suddenly exclaimed Si. "I won't let 'em know I'm here, but if I'm away up in the garret I can't even hear 'em knock. I just know I'd have to come to the door, if I could hear 'em."

It was a bright thought for a boy to think under such difficulties, and it spurred him upstairs, on a jump, three steps at a jump. What was more, Tiger seemed to recover his spirits. His tail was all right again, his ears alert and lively, and he darted upstairs with Si, uttering a joyous "Woof!" as if somebody had said "Rats!" to him.

They had a pretty narrow escape, he and Si, for they barely reached the door at the foot of the garret stairs in time. There was a key in the door, and a cobweb over the key. Si took hold of it and turned, turned, but it was almost stuck with rust.

"Turn! Will you!" he said, with all the twist he could give.

Click, grate, a little, sharp squeak, the lock worked, the door opened, and Tiger sprung past him, with a bound and a bark. Perhaps he thought he and Si were escaping an explosion, but Si was saying:

"That's Saunders and the crowd. I know it is.

Let 'em knock! I can't hear 'em after I've shut this door behind me."

He followed Tiger. The door came to with a bang. He went up a very steep, narrow, shadowy flight of stairs, and then he was all alone in what was by all odds the largest room in the house. What was more, no other room had, or could have, so much in it.

There was, indeed, a banging at the back door of the Moore house, Then there came a ringing of the front door bell and more banging, but Mr. Moore's fellow-citizens were compelled to give it up and say:

"Well! 'Tis curious! There isn't a soul at home. Guess they must have been scared away by the explosion."

That was hardly what sent them, but Mr. Moore was already stopped, on his way to Lander's, and a crowd was gathering around him in front of Shaler's store. His wife was safe under Mrs. Vrooman's protection, and Si was saying:

"Haven't I wanted to get up here? I kind of wonder why I didn't come before? Father says he's thought of it, again and again, only it wasn't of any use. Mother's had too much to do, always. She'd have to have help, she said, if she tried to clean it out, and the other rooms were more than

she could tend to. Guess they are, but where did all the dust come from! I don't see why spiders make webs where the flies can't come. Loads of 'em!"

It was one great garret, under the roof over the main part of the house, and it had a window at each end, but not much light could get in at either of them, through the dirt and cobwebs. The dust was already beginning to rise, however, for Tiger at once began a process of general investigation, only stopping to sneeze and cough, as he took his head out of cranny after cranny.

"Guess I'll open the windows," said Si, and Tiger at once barked an approval, for a current of fresh sea-breeze came in with the first rush of yellow sunshine. If he were hunting for either a rat or an explosion he had thus far failed, but Si felt a curious, creeping sensation.

"This garret's been here ever since the house was built," he said, "and nobody knows how long ago that was. I guess they stowed things here and forgot to come back after them. What's that?"

"Woof!" replied Tiger; but he was speaking of something else, and he paid no attention to the next thing Si told him:

"Mother says she used to spin a little, and grandmother was a great spinner. Two spinning-wheels,

two reels. Yes, sir, and that's an old loom! They used to do their own weaving at home. That thing 'll never come downstairs again!"

The loom and the spinning-wheels only held his eyes for a moment, and nothing whatever was holding in Tiger. He was pawing desperately at the foot of something against one of the center-posts.

"Woof! Yelp! Woof!" Tiger had succeeded. He had tipped over something that came down all over him, with a great clatter and clang, and Si shouted:

"Oh! Hurrah!" for banging down at his very feet came a great, curved, scythe-like, brass-hilted cavalry broadsword, in a leather sheath.

"A sword! A sword! And there's a gun, with a bayonet on it! And another gun! Oh, but ain't I glad I came up here!"

"Woof!" shouted Tiger, but he was now smelling around the edges of an enormous, hair-covered trunk.

CHAPTER XII.

TIGER AND SI.

Si Moore had not been to sea. He had not crossed any ocean. He had only sailed up the garret stairs into a new country that he had never seen before. It was wonderfully new, but, like every other land which men sail to and find, it was new only to the discoverer, for America itself was old, old, old, when Columbus steered his queer-looking Spanish ships across the Atlantic.

The old saber stuck in its sheath for a moment, but Si tugged daringly at the old-fashioned basket-hilt, and after a moment out came the dull blue shining blade. There were only a few rust spots from heel to point, and Si fairly shivered with delight as he swung it over his head and thought what a weapon it must have been.

"Wonder if it's ever been in battle. Of course it has. Men have been killed with it. See the nicks in the edge! I wonder how they came to be there.

I guess I'll show it to Captain Vrooman and see what he'll say about it."

"Woof!" said Tiger, and Si agreed with him that there was more exploring to be done in that new-old country.

So he sheathed the sword and laid it very carefully down to go and take a look at the guns and the other things. Saunders had gone back to the gap in the ridge, after he gave up finding Mr. Moore at the house, and there he stood, now, talking with Mr. Sampson.

"Why, Saunders," exclaimed the latter, "I had to leave my team in the road till they filled that place up. If this isn't the queerest thing I ever saw!"

"They burst it right out, at one blast," responded Saunders.

"Moore never told me he was going to try on any such thing," said Sampson. "Now it's done, it can't be helped, though. What I want to know is, what's become of my dog. He's gone!"

"Got himself blowed up, most likely," said Saunders; "but the Moore farm 'll be half as large again. That's all good land where the swamp was. There won't be any swamp now."

"Of course there won't," replied Sampson, a little red in the face. "I'm willing he should make an

improvement. It doesn't cost me anything to speak of. But I'd like to know what he did with Tige. Best watch-dog! I could go and leave the house all alone. If he's been hurt by this here blast——"

"Blew him sky-high, I s'pose," said Saunders. "He may have been pawing at it when it went off. You may find bits of him all over the swamp."

"I'll just hunt up Moore or Si," exclaimed Mr. Sampson. "I left him tied up, and the rope's broke. I won't lose such a dog as that for nothing."

"You'll have to pay for mending the road, too," said Saunders. "The water came from your land. I saw it come. It knocked us all down, too. I s'pose you ought to pay something for that——"

"I'm going to see what's been done with Tige!" angrily responded Mr. Sampson. "There's a ditch right across my land, too, and a hole in my fence. I'll go and bring my team home."

"Some of them 'll charge you pretty well," said Saunders, as Sampson strode away along the path of the freshet. "I guess I'll go and get some of my own mud off. It's getting dry. I'll see if I can't get some of 'em to send in bills for damages to Sampson——"

Off he went through the Moore place, chuckling, but nobody ever did get much comfort out of Saun-

ders, and perhaps his neighbor knew him pretty well.

Down in the village there was really an increase of the excitement, now that Mr. Moore had explained the explosion. It seemed to most people more mysterious than ever, and some who had to go home past the Lander place walked away around by the other road. How could they know but what that shop of his was stored with pugnite and electricity? What if tons and tons of thunder and lightning should happen to go off, just as they were going by? He was considering that matter, himself, as he stood in his shop, looking regretfully down at a heap of yellowish, powdery stuff in a box.

"No," he said. "I could make some, but I won't. Not till I make some place to try it on. I want some rocks, or the side of a hill. Well, yes, what I want to know is whether it'll work under water, wet or dry. I think it's got to be kept pretty dry. Biggest invention! He was evidently feeling proud and happy, like a man who had gained a great success and who believed that there was more to come. He was not an ounce happier, however, than were Si and Tiger, away up in the dusty, cobwebbed garret of the Moore house.

"I s'pose I mustn't stay here too long," said Si; "but what a bayonet that is! If it wasn't so awful

rusty. So are the guns. I never saw a flint-lock on a gun before. I guess I'll fix 'em up and find out how they make 'em go off."

He put down the heavy, rusty old weapon he was handling somewhat as if he feared it might break if he dropped it, and he was beginning to examine the hasp of the old trunk.

"Covered with horse-hide," he said, "from a sorrel horse. Lots of the hair's been worn off. Guess I can open it. Hullo! 'Twasn't locked!"

Up, as he tugged at it, came the top part of the old trunk, and he saw that it was packed full, for he hesitated.

"It's ours," he said. "Father bought the house and everything in it——"

"Woof!" said Tige, loudly, close behind him. "Woof!"

What he meant was:

"Look at this! See what I found where I was hunting for rats!"

"I know!" shouted Si. "Why, it's an old cartridge box, such as the soldiers wear, but it's empty. Not a cartridge. They shot them all away. Yes, there's one, sticking in the corner. Hurrah!"

It was a cylinder of brown paper, about as long as two finger-joints, and Si's first attempt to examine it broke it in two in the middle.

"There!" he said. "I'm sorry I did that. I must be more careful. They used pretty coarse powder, but most of it is caked. Pretty big charge, too."

He opened the powder part first, a little, to see what it was, and then laid it down to inspect the other half.

"Big round bullet," he remarked, as it came out of the paper. Those are buckshot. Three of them. Now I'll do it up again and show it to the captain. Tige, keep out of that! Here, give that to me! Drop it!"

He had lost all fear of the ferocious mastiff, while Tige was a dog full of rejoicing over his new freedom and his new playfellow. He felt that he and Si were bound to be the best of friends, unless Si should get into another rock and explode again.

He had plunged at once, nose and paws, into the open trunk, and he now dropped at Si's feet, very obediently, the first of his findings.

"Cocked hat!" exclaimed Si, "but there isn't much left of the feather, Tige. Hold on! Get out!"

"Woof!" shouted Tige. "Yelp!"

He sprang away from the trunk, and began to paw his nose, vigorously, while Si looked in to see what had come next. Something glittered.

"That's an old coat," he said; "pair of leather breeches. Come down to the knee. Hullo! Pair of spurs. Tige rubbed his nose against them a little too hard. Tickled him too much. Wouldn't they make a horse jump! Guess I wouldn't want to be on him, after they'd stuck him."

"Woof!" replied Tige, but he came back to the trunk with an inquiring face that had some caution in it. Even when Si put the spurs on the floor, for him to study, he turned one of them over with a paw and then drew away from it suspiciously. It might prick him again, for all he knew about spurs.

"What boots!" said Si. "And that's a dagger. Isn't it a beauty? Soldiers don't wear daggers nowadays. But if that isn't the queerest sword I ever saw!"

He pulled it out, after lifting the clothes and a kind of leather case. It had no sheath. Its handle was of brass, with a guard, and with a round, strong brass plate three inches across it at the hilt. The blade was long, slender, three-cornered, without any edges, and it tapered to a sharp point.

"I'll ask the captain what that is," said Si, "but I'm going to shut it all up now; I want to tell mother what a garret this is. Tige! come out of that—come!"

"Woof!" replied Tige, in a husky, fussy, voice, but he stuck to some prize or other until he pulled it out from the pile of things he found it under. He knew leather, at least, if he did not understand spurs.

Si studied a moment over Tiger's discovery before he told him.

"They carried pistols in 'em. Oh! why, Tige, the pistols are in them now! How do they open? There."

Tiger was dancing around, ready to seize any thing that might jump out of those old cavalry holsters, but he whined a little and kept away when Si grasped and drew out a large, long, heavy flint-locked horse-pistol.

"Isn't that tremendous?" he exclaimed, after a long breath. "I can cock it. That's the way it cocks."

Tiger watched him, intelligently, with evident interest, as he lifted the ancient weapon and aimed at the center post of the garret. Si was hardly aware that he had his finger on the trigger.

Bang!

"Woof! Woof! Yelp!" and there was Tiger, crouching between Si's legs in utter dismay. Another of those explosions had come. The boy he was beginning to love and trust had burst again and

there was no more happiness for him in that garret.

"How it did kick!" said Si, rubbing his arm. "I didn't think about it's being loaded. Who'd have thought it could go off, after being shut up so long. Poor Tige! Good fellow."

"Silas! Silas!" shouted the voice of Mrs. Moore at the foot of the garret-stairs. "What is it? Oh, dear! What are you doing?"

She was on her way up, terribly frightened, too, and well she may have been, when he responded:

"Why, mother, it's nothing but an old horse pistol."

"How came it to go off? You're not hurt, are you? I hunted all over for you."

"Look at it," began Si, but her next exclamation was:

"Why, it's Sampson's dog! Silas!"

"Woof!" said Tiger, very gently, from his hiding place behind Si, but he thought of something, for he at once picked up the cocked hat and carried it to her, wagging his tail in the most friendly and respectful manner.

"He's as gentle as a kitten, mother," said Si, and Tiger tried to speak for himself, but his mouth was too full.

Mrs. Moore was a woman of courage, for she

patted his head and spoke to him. When, however she took the cocked hat, in a fever of sudden interest, he sprang away delighted and began to look around for something else.

"Tige!" said Si, commandingly.

Back went Tiger, at once, to Mrs. Moore, with a scared look and a whine. He knew who she was, undoubtedly, and perhaps she might prevent Si from exploding at him. It was well for a dog let loose under trials to make as many friends as he could, and he was highly pleased to have her pat him again.

"Oh, Silas!" she said, "I can't stop here—not now. I want to ever so much. Don't touch that other pistol. Oh, what lots of things!"

"Look into the trunk, mother."

"Not this time," she said. "Why, Si there's more furniture. I don't know what there is. But they want you to come over to Captain Vrooman's as soon as you can after tea. The captain wants you—not Mrs. Vrooman. Come right downstairs, now. You're all dust."

"I was just coming," said Si, "when Tige found the pistols. There, I was aiming straight! I hit the post. Come on, Tige."

Tiger was ready to come, but another of his trials was before him. Steep and narrow were the garret-

stairs. Mrs. Moore could go down easily, and so could Si, but a long, four-footed, heavy dog, built for level ground and entirely ignorant of stairs, could only stand at the top and whine until Si took pity on him. What a comfort it was, then, to have a playfellow who could put an arm around him and steady him down from stair to stair. No wonder Tige turned and licked Si's face, and seemed to forget how awfully loud he could go off every now and then.

"Oh, but that garret!" said Si, as they reached the kitchen. "Won't I have a time there! But Tige had better go home."

Tiger had gone already, for the door was open.

The Sampson place had a deep crease across it, from the gap in the ridge at Moore's line, where the swamp used to be, down to the shore road. It did not go straight by any means, for the water had avoided knolls and had dodged two large stone heaps. Then it had found the old hollow and had improved it all the way to the beach. There was only a little trickle running now along the bottom of the crease, and that also had been provided for by skillful engineering. The road-master had not filled up the furrow across the road. He had lined it with two old logs, two feet apart, over which he had laid short pieces and then covered them with

planks, before putting on any sand. It had saved any amount of shoveling and wheelbarrow work, and all his fellow-citizens agreed with him that:

"Naow, ef any more water comes daown from that there swamp, it can git aout into the Saound. That there culvert 'll lay till the timber rots."

Sampson's team had been the first to go over the new culvert, and his horses were now in his own barn, but he was standing in front of it, with his hands in his pockets.

"I don't care what Saunders says," he remarked. "You can't put the ridge back where it was. That hole 'll stay there. The swamp's gone, but what I want to know is, where's my dog? If old Lander fired off that blast when Tige was there——"

"Woof! Woof! Woof!"

"Tige! Yes! Old fellow. Why, Tige! Got back? Hey? Where've you been? You ain't hurt a mite. I'll take it all back. Wouldn't ha' lost you for anything."

Tiger was jumping all over him in great delight, perhaps, at finding nothing more blown up, that he could see. Then he whined a little, for Mr. Sampson's next duty was to tie him up affectionately. In another moment Tiger was straining against his collar and barking savagely in the direction of the

Moore swamp. He had returned to his post of duty and it looked as if he meant to do the barking required to make up for lost time.

Mr. Moore himself had returned to his home and he was listening to Si's report of the garret when he suddenly interrupted him.

"There!" he said, "Sampson is home and he has tied up Tige. Glad of it. I'll know what to say to Sampson when I see him. I've considered the whole matter, It's been the best piece of luck I've had since I bought the place."

"That's so," said Si, "and there are loads and loads of things in the garret."

"More of the guns and pistols may be loaded, too," replied his thoughtful father, "and you must be careful how you handle them."

"Guess I will," said Si. "That old horse-pistol kicked like everything."

He could feel it in his arm yet, when he went out to attend to his chores, but what he felt even more seriously was the prospect of a long talk with Captain Vrooman. It was the very thing he wished for, but then, there was Mrs. Vrooman. He did not feel any great fear of Katie, unless there should happen to be other girls there, come to visit her. He knew there was always danger of that.

The captain himself had a visitor, for he and

Saunders were holding a council of their own over the front gate.

"She's just the boat for that pair of boys," said Saunders. "She's pretty enough and she's safe. Not too much sail. But then, they're good hands with a boat, especially Si."

"I'll pay for her soon as she comes," replied the captain. "It wouldn't do to leave them without a boat. But what about the one they wrecked?"

"Wrecked?" exclaimed Saunders, chuckling. "The old "Sea Lion?" Why, the reason I didn't fix her up was because she wasn't worth what it would cost. I told the boys to do what they pleased with her. I could not let her out to folks. I never thought of any risk to them, and when the men calked her for them I supposed she was safe enough. I sha'n't charge a cent for her. I always liked Si and Tom."

"We were both boys, once," said the captain. "Fact is, I'm a good deal of a boy yet. I know boys!"

"So do I," said Saunders, heartily.

"But, do you know, Sampson says the noise of that blast could be heard in Puttogue? He was on his way home when it went off, and it sounded close by."

Inside of the Vrooman house Katie sat at her piano looking dolefully at a lot of new music, one sheet of which was spread and was looking back at

her as if it expected to be practiced. It was pretty black-looking music, such as seems to imply hard work.

"Oh, dear!" said Katie, "I like music, but I'd rather do something else. I wish mother'd let me just keep house for her as long as father's here. I like that best, at any time."

Mrs. Vrooman was nearer than Katie knew, for she had come in quietly and was looking at the music as if she felt pride in having a daughter who could play such black-barred, tangled, scientific stuff as that.

"Why, Katie," she said, "you know how glad he was and how he liked it. He has heard real good performers, too, and he liked all I told him about your studies, and your drawing and your French. If you should ever go to Europe——"

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Katie. "That's what I was thinking of. I've never seen anything but Eastwood and the Cove, and what I can see with the glass when I'm up in the 'top'."

"Katie," almost whispered her mother, "I mustn't tell, I mustn't say any more now; but it's just as likely as not that you and I will see Europe before a great while."

"Oh, mother!" said Katie. "Europe? Yes, mother, I'll go to work. I'll practice. Europe! Oh!"

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO NEW PROPELLERS.

Si was sitting quietly at the supper-table when one of his most pressing thoughts got away from him and came out very much as if it spoke for itself.

"Mother," he suddenly remarked, "I wish I hadn't promised to go over to Captain Vrooman's to-night. She always has such a lot of company."

In his mind there may have been more than one captain to meet across the way, evidently.

"Well," said his mother, "you did promise. There's no help for it. Besides, you ought not to feel so. It's foolish. You always behave yourself. What are you afraid of?"

Si's answer to that question made him stand up and turn slowly around.

"Do I look all right?" he asked, anxiously. "Will I do, if I should be there?"

"Why, yes," she said. "Let us see your shoes. Be sure you are all brushed. Yes, you'll do. But why didn't you put on a necktie?"

"It's so warm," was his first excuse, but the next was the right one: "Besides, the captain doesn't wear any. He won't if he can help it."

"I'd put one on, Si," said his father, thoughtfully. "But you ought not to be compelled to fix up as if you were going to church, just to cross the street."

"You care more about it than they will," said his mother, "but you'd better wear one."

It strengthened him to have a little sympathy, but he was pretty warm before he felt satisfied with his necktie. Then he crossed the road, boldly enough, but his first clear idea after reaching the piazza and pulling the bell-knob was that he had never rung that bell before. At least, it had never before answered him so loudly. He also felt a dreadful uncertainty as to who or how many he might see when the door should open. There were lights in the parlor. His heart was beating hard, and it did him no manner of good to pull down his vest and smooth his hair.

"There!" he said, anxiously. "Somebody's coming!"

Open swung the door, and it was a vast relief, for it was Katie, all alone.

"Oh, Si!" she said; "is that you? Come right in! Father's out in the sitting-room."

"Yes," responded Si; "I didn't come to see any-

body else. Is your mother pretty well to-night? I can't stay long.

"Of course she is," said Katie, without any ceremony whatever. "Mother's always well. Come along! Father's been telling the greatest lot of sea-yarns. You just ought to have heard him!"

"Don't I wish I had!" exclaimed Si, with a sense of breathing more freely.

He stepped forward and followed her through the entry, with only a quick side glance into the parlor.

There may have been only three or four neighbors there, but they were all women, and the parlor seemed to him about full. What if Katie had led him in there?

Everything had been so warm, up to that moment, that the sitting-room looked cool and refreshing when he walked in. There was a big, shaded lamp on the table, and the captain, wearing a queer kind of loose linen jacket, was sitting comfortably in his great wicker chair, reading a newspaper. He arose at once when Katie and Si came in, and out went his hand in the heartiest kind of welcome. Perhaps, however, it was something in Si's face that made him laugh too, as he said:

"All right, Si—I'm glad you came. I've seen Saunders. Your new boat is a good one, he says. She'll be here in a day or two."

"New boat?" stammered Si.

"Yes, sir, new boat," laughed the captain. "For you and Tom. You'll be glad that the old one was knocked to pieces."

This was sudden. Si's face was all one glow, and he could not think what to say, but Katie helped him.

"Why, Si," she said; "don't you know? It's for saving mother!"

"Why!" exclaimed Si. "I didn't save her! She swam as well as anybody, and she had two or three life-preservers. We just happened to be there."

"Never mind, Si," interrupted the captain. "You and Tom are all right. What you want is a boat that won't leak. It's coming. But, now, you were with Lander when that blast went off?"

"Oh, yes," said Si. "You ought to have seen it!"

"That's it," said the captain. "Tell me all about it, and about that new powder of his. I want to know."

"Well," replied Si, thoughtfully, "it's great powder. It's some like pounded clay, and it'll blow up anything. But he says that nothing but lightning 'll make it go off. I guess he doesn't know all about it yet, though. It's a new invention."

"Of course," said the captain. "That's Lander.

Nobody can tell what he'll invent next. He'll go up, some day. Tell me just how he worked it, now. Everything he did."

The great idea in Si's mind, and that had given him courage to come, had been that he was to hear Captain Vrooman spin yarns about his voyages, and particularly about the boat in the boat-house, next to that very room. Still, he was polite, and he was quite willing to tell about the explosion, including its effect upon Mr. Sampson's dog.

The captain listened and laughed and asked questions until Mrs. Vrooman came to the door from the parlor and looked in as if she wished she were there. Katie was at the piano again, however, with some very black music before her, and her mother was compelled to remain there with her and the parlor company. Katie herself had heard too much, perhaps. She kept on playing, after skipping a page, but she felt as if she hated every note she struck.

"I'll get out there," she said to herself, "the first chance. Wasn't that queer about Tiger? Wish I could hear the rest!"

It seemed to Si as if Tiger, or telling about him, led the rest of his story into the house and up the garret-stairs. The moment that he and Tiger were in the garret, as the yarn spun on, Captain Vroo-

man's whole manner changed, and he leaned forward, exclaiming:

"Hold on, Si! Is that the first time anybody's been there? Go right on! Tell me what you found there!"

"Loads of things!" said Si. "And there's lots more left. It beats anything I ever heard of!"

He himself was getting very eager about it but he would not have dreamed that an old sea-captain could be so interested in any rubbish found in a garret, until just after he mentioned the saber and the guns. Captain Vrooman's hand came down heavily upon the table.

"Hold on, Si!" he said. "Just let me tell you something right there. You don't know about that house, but I do. All the land, away up around the Point, used to be Vrooman land. Part of that very house was built before the Revolutionary war. and the rest just after it, by a man named Vrooman. He was a grand-uncle of mine. He was an officer of the old Continental Army."

"May be those things in the old trunk used to belong to him," said Si, but the captain was getting excited and went right on.

"That's one of the oldest houses. They had to put on a new roof, of course, and new siding, and it's been plastered and painted, and there's been more

"Hold on, Si! Is that the first time anybody's been there?"

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built on, but it's the same house. There it's been, ever since Ensign Vrooman (he was a colonel then) drilled his first squad of men in the front yard and got them ready to march away with General Putnam and fight the red-coats at Bunker Hill. Now, Si, tell me what you found."

Si's eyes were dancing, and he felt finely. He was so interested, too, that he had not noticed the stopping of the piano, nor the opening wide of the parlor door; nor even the fact that Katie had slipped out into the sitting-room. He hardly saw her until she came over and sat down by her father and listened, as hard as he did, while all the visitors in the parlor seemed to be keeping still.

"To think of that awful dog helping him!" whispered Mrs. Vrooman to one of her friends, but Si had got to Tiger and the cocked hat, and he felt full of courage to go on.

"That must have been old Colonel Vrooman's hat!" chuckled the captain. "I'm going to make your father turn that and the saber over to me. Family keepsakes!"

"He will," said Si, and he went on a little further about his findings, but the captain stopped him.

"Hold on, Si!" he said. "I'll tell you! That long gun that flares at the muzzle—that's a ducking gun. The one with the bayonet is a British

musket, an old Queen's arm. They must have captured it in some fight or other. The holsters were the colonel's own, and I want 'em. The three-cornered sword was a British sergeant's sticker, and the dagger was a British 'midshipman's dirk. All the cartridges for smooth-bore muskets carried a ball and three buckshot. We use rifles now, but we used smooth-bores up to the beginning of the Civil War."

Si was interested in all that the captain had to say about guns and the Revolutionary War after that, but at last some of Mrs. Vrooman's visitors said they must go home, for it was almost ten o'clock.

"Ten?" he exclaimed, suddenly. "Why, I came over to hear Captain Vrooman spin a yarn."

"So you spun one of your own," laughed the captain.

"Well, no; I guess you did it," said Si, with a hot feeling all over him, for they were all laughing.

He was not altogether sure of how he managed saying good-night, but Mrs. Moore seemed pretty well satisfied with the account he gave her, at home, before she would let him go up to bed. If he did not go to sleep at once, for thinking of the garret and guns and war and the captain's stories of old

battles, he slept soundly enough not to dream about any of it.

The next day was a Saturday, and, curiously enough, it promised to be a dull one.

"When a fellow's at school," thought Si, "Saturday's a good day, unless it rains, but in vacation it's just like the rest of the week. Tom and I haven't a thing to do. No boat! Well, if the new boat gets here on Monday he and I can make our trip to Foam Island. I'll see him about that. Soon's I've done my chores and had breakfast, though, I'll go over and see Tiger. Wonder if he'll know me, now he's tied up again?"

One of his chores, just after breakfast, must have been the trip he made to the gap in the ridge, and to see how fast the swamp was draining and drying.

"Loads of mud yet," he said, "but father says it'll do to plow before fall. It doesn't smell first-rate."

He went on across Mr. Sampson's land, toward the barns, and he had never heard Tiger do louder barking.

"Same old dog," he said. "Just see him spring against his collar. What if he should break it again? He might."

Bound, strain, howl, all but roar, for Tiger was doing his whole duty as a conscientious watchdog,

but Si walked steadily nearer, and there was a change in the tone of the music. Then the bounds grew less and less furious and there were even faint signs of tail-wagging.

"Why!" exclaimed Si; "if he isn't sitting down! I'll go up to him."

A sort of whine answered him, and Tiger's entire expression altered. He pawed the ground for a moment, looked again at Si, and then he turned around with a drooping tail and disappeared in his kennel. His head came timidly out, as Si came closer, and he may have looked to see if there were any signs of another explosion, but at that moment the voice of Sampson himself, from the barn, shouted out:

"Si, I wish you'd tell me how it was about that dog. Did anything hurt him?"

"Not a thing," said Si, but while he was giving his neighbor a full account of Tiger's adventures the dog himself came out of the kennel to smell of Si's hand and to make sure that the visit of his new playfellow was friendly.

Mr. Sampson was pretty well satisfied, so far as Si and Tiger were concerned, but Si went on through the yard and into the road with an increasing fear that Saturday was going to have nothing whatever in it. It was getting hotter, too, and he was begin-

ning to think about the garret and the guns, and how awfully hot and dusty the garret would be, when, as he reached the foot of the hill, he looked down the road.

"Hullo!" he said. "Tom's coming! I'll wait and tell him about the boat."

There had indeed been a dust raised in the garret, for Captain Vrooman himself had been there, with Mr. Moore, and some of Si's treasures had already gone over to the boat-house museum. That business was all over now, and Mr. Moore was out in the field beyond the swamp, with a man to help him, and Mrs. Moore had gone away to the other end of the village for a talk with Mrs. Lander.

Tom was walking fast, and his face was red with excitement. When he came within speaking distance of Si it seemed as if they both said "boat" at the same moment, and then all the dullness was gone. Tom had met Saunders and had heard all about it, and now, as he and Si walked up the hill together, they invented new voyages for the new boat every other minute. It was great, but they had an unexpected trial, right before them.

"Come on in, Tom!" shouted Si, as they reached the gate. "We'll go up and take a look at those things in the garret, and then I'll take you out and show you where old Lander blew up the swamp."

Tom was too much excited about it to make any answer, but Si's new wonders had become all alive to him again in an instant, now that he had somebody to show them to. It wasn't to be so dull a Saturday, after all.

They went around to the kitchen door and it was open, so they could get in, but Si at once exclaimed :

"Tom, the folks are gone, but that isn't any difference. Mother says I may rummage that garret all I want to."

Clank-tink-clank, went the doleful front door-bell.

"Come on," said Si. "All I'll have to do is to tell them she's gone somewhere."

With that understanding clear in their minds the two boys hurried through the hall and opened the door. Si even opened his mouth to say, "Mother isn't at home," but he shut it again and felt that he would give anything if it were right for him and Tom to run.

There, before them, stood an array of women such as they had no dream of ever meeting. They knew every one of them, but it was none the less awful, even when Katie Vrooman shouted :

"Oh, Si ! Come out and see what they've brought you ! For you and Tom ! Mother and I came over with them."

Her eyes were dancing, and her feet were trying

not to do so, but Mrs. Bronson's face was as radiant as Katie's, and so were those of Miss Keyser and Belle and her cousins.

"Where's your mother, Si?" asked Mrs. Vrooman.

"Don't know, ma'am," he stammered. "I guess she's gone to the village."

His eyes, however, were looking past her, at some things that were held by a couple of men on the walk leading up to the piazza, and he heard Tom, a little behind him, whispering:

"Jingo! Si, those are prime bicycles!"

Mrs. Bronson must have said something. Si was sure she had, and so had all the others, and he knew they spoke about the thunder-storm and the wreck of the "Sea Lion". He was thinking: "Oh, but don't I wish mother were here!"

Then he was dimly aware how great was his reliance upon Mrs. Vrooman, for he found himself standing close by her while Mrs. Bronson presented him with the larger of the two wheels and Tom with the other. He heard Miss Keyser remark:

"I do hope Si is large enough! It would be too bad if he couldn't learn to ride it."

"It isn't a bit too large," he said. "Besides, I'm growing pretty fast."

"Si," said Belle, "you needn't be afraid to try it, now. Everybody has to begin. Any boy can learn how——"

"Of course he can!" said Mrs. Bronson. "I know lots of boys that ride bicycles."

So did the other ladies, and they all tried to encourage Si, but Tom had altogether the best of him. Somewhere or other, Tom had learned to mount a wheel. He had not said a word, but he had seemed to be petting and coaxing the one which now belonged to him. Suddenly he made a little run with it, sprang to the seat, and was off, while Si shouted:

"Look out, Tom!" in a tone of deep anxiety, as if to have him tumble then and there would have disgraced them both.

"I won't fall!" shouted back Tom, as if he understood, and Si at once recovered some confidence, but he stuck to Mrs. Vrooman.

"I sent for them right away," explained Mrs. Bronson, "and they came by the next express. We couldn't think of anything else you'd like."

"Si," said Katie, in a low voice, "why don't you thank them?"

"Why," said Si reddening, "I guess I do thank them! It's just what we wanted. But I hope they'll never get such another ducking. I was half

afraid, at one time, though, they'd never get ashore. Glad they did!"

"That will do first-rate, Si," said Mrs. Vrooman. "You couldn't say more than that if you should try."

"Now, then, Silas," said Mrs. Bronson, "as your mother is not at home, we won't come in. We are all going back to Mrs. Vrooman's. If she returns soon, please tell her that we very much wish to see her. As soon as you can ride, you must wheel yourself to Puttogue."

Si's tongue seemed loosened, for he responded, promptly and heartily:

"Of course I will! Tom'll come, too. Here he comes now. I'd no notion he could do it!"

Little he knew how daring and all but desperate a burst of skill and effort that had been for Tom, out through the gate and up the road, until he and his wheel ran into a load of hay, so he could stop and mount again and come back. His trial trip, however, had saved him from all need for making a speech, except saying his plain "Yes, ma'am," or "Thank you, ma'am," when they said they were all coming to call upon his mother.

All smiles and sunshine, that party of happy women said good-bye and went away, leaving behind them two very happy but very much relieved young-

sters. Tom, indeed, was only left there for a few minutes. He had an air of being overcome, and he really felt that he would be more sure in his own mind that he owned that bicycle after taking it home. Still, he was quite willing to lead it and let it walk beside him downhill to the Cove.

When Tom went away, Katie was still lingering on the walk in front of the piazza, and it looked as if she had been waiting for him to go, for she leaned over Si's wheel to say to him :

"Si, I just know mother'd let me try. Your wheel wouldn't do but Tom's would. It's one of the interchangeable wheels, made so that girls can ride them."

"Oh!" exclaimed Si. "Why, Katie, he wants to try mine, and I can trade with him any day. You can have it."

"Si, " said Katie. "If I could learn, and show father I know how, he'd get me one."

"That's so," said Si. "Girls ride as well as anybody. I've seen 'em. Why, Tom would be glad enough. Anyhow, he can have mine, when you are using his."

"I must practise a little before anybody knows," said Katie, almost breathlessly ; "but I must hurry home, now."

Off she went, and there stood Si, a little more

glad to be alone than he would have dared tell her.

"Splendid!" was all he said, at first, but he gazed all over his beautiful new wheel with a strange feeling, as if its spidery web of steel, its saddle and lamp and bell, must belong to a kind of dream.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, then. "It's as good for the land as a boat is for the water! Tom and I can go anywhere! I know lots of places. Oh, but won't we have a time?"

If he asked that question of the bicycle it only swung around a little and turned its eye-like lamp at him without saying anything whatever.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEELS AND WINGS.

Mr. and Mrs. Moore came home together that Saturday afternoon, and Si had a pretty interesting report to make. Somehow or other, nevertheless, they missed him, after supper, and neither they nor anybody else knew exactly how he spent the evening. When the next morning came there was little need for a look at a calendar to know that it was Sunday. Even Tiger lay asleep in front of his kennel and did not rise to bark when a wagon went by on the road, and all Eastwood seemed to have followed his example.

All was still at the Moore place, and at the bottom of the gap in the ledge a tiny ribbon of water crept across the Sampson land, while behind it the old swamp slowly dried away.

Perhaps as quiet a house as any was that of the sea captain who was resting after the long cruise of the "Wanderer." He was not asleep, however, for he was keeping his morning watch. There he sat,

book in hand, in the stern of the boat, with only the six dummies for company. The early coming sun of summer was up and he could have read, but he was not reading. He had done a curious thing, moreover, for he had stepped the mast of the boat, swung out its boom and raised the sail—a patched and weather-worn sail. There was a breeze that fluttered out the flag from the peak of the staff, so high above him, and enough of it came through the boat-house, from door to door, to gently fill the sail. It even rocked the loosely-resting boat, from time to time, as if helping the captain to imagine himself afloat upon some unknown sea.

"I shall never forget one day of it," he said, as he closed his book. "What a voyage it was! Yes, I must spin that yarn to Si. It may teach him something. He is only a boy, and I suppose he has a long voyage before him. It won't be all steady trade winds, either. He will sail into storms or they will come and find him. Every fellow has his share of stormy weather. What's worse, there are calms. I'd rather have a good, healthy storm than a calm, any day."

He arose, as if his watch were ended, got out of the boat, picked up his glass and climbed the stairs and rope ladder to the "top," for a sea-captain's study of all that could be seen between him and the

horizon. Sunday along shore was not exactly a calm, but it seemed so to Si and Tom.

Both of them were troubled, all day long, by an idea that there were two brand-new bicycles that were aching to get out of doors and have a run. Now and then, too, a boat, finer than any bicycle, came sailing into their thoughts, with her sails spread and a pennant flying and a pair of bright spoon hooks trolling through the waves behind her.

She also, however, was a Sunday-keeping boat, and she was anchored—somewhere. Even the garret came near to having a complete rest, but once in the afternoon, Si crept up the stairs and looked all around, as if he wanted to see how his treasures were getting along. Some things, he knew, had gone to the captain's, and he was half regretting it, when his eyes found an entirely new matter of interest, hanging up near one of the windows.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "If that isn't a clock! Guess it's used up. I don't care if it is. I'll get it down to-morrow and see what there is of it. Mother says she's going to stir out every stick of that old furniture."

Mrs. Moore was willing that Si should bring his wheel into the sitting-room and keep it there over night, for safety, but she would not let him sleep on the sofa to keep it company. He had to go up to

his own room, as usual. So he had the night before, and he had not slept as well. Perhaps it had something to do with his being out so early, when Monday morning came, and all his chores were finished before anybody was astir. That is on the Moore place, for the first words Si heard, after he got away from the bicycle and went to his duties, came across the fence from Sampson's barnyard, to tell him that Tiger was also out of his kennel. Si answering "Hullo, Tige!" however, only brought back a kind of discontented howl for liberty and for some good, dusty garret to rummage in.

All the while there was an expression on Si's face which had shown itself again and again during the quiet hours of Sunday. It was not nervousness nor doubt, by any means, and yet he did say, aloud once:

"Tell you what, I wouldn't have risked it as Tom did, not for anything! Think of a fellow tumbling off, right before all that crowd! He came pretty near it. Wouldn't they have laughed?"

He almost did so, about something or other, but he hardly said a word about his wheel when he went in to his breakfast. His father and mother did, and they cautioned him carefully. Mr. Moore told him of several fellows who had been badly hurt by rashly mounting bicycles before they knew how to

ride. Mrs. Moore must have felt differently about it. She had examined every curve and corner of that very brilliant machine with pride and admiration, and now she told Si:

"It's the prettiest one I've seen! Now, Si, you just learn! Try it on! I know you can, if you persevere! I want you to beat any other boy of your size in Eastwood. Don't be afraid of it! What if you do tumble a few times?"

So she encouraged him, and she may have brought him up to the right pitch, for, as soon as his father was far enough out by the swamp, and she was upstairs, with an idea of looking into the garret after the beds were made, Si's bicycle silently arose from leaning against the wall and led him out into the yard. It might as well have said:

"Come along, can't you? I've waited here long enough!"

What Si said, with a great glow on his face was:

"Now, I guess I'll show 'em. I did it, Saturday night! They don't know I was ever on one! Hurrah!"

He had therefore been keeping a kind of secret, he and his new bicycle. Sometime and somewhere, he did not now say when or where, he and some other wheel had become so well acquainted that he felt on pretty good terms with this one,

after his Saturday evening's practice, and after having lived in the same house with it over Sunday.

"It's a splendid wheel!" he said of it. "All the improvements! Latest style! Oh, but isn't it a bully!"

That was when he stood by it, in the path from the barn to the house, after looking in all directions, to be sure that nobody could see whether he climbed it right or not.

"Woof!" came sharply from behind the Sampson fence, like a send-off signal.

A few steps forward, an easy spring—for no one was looking—and Si was in the saddle, with a shout and a tingle in every nerve, and away he went, around the house, through the gate, into the road and on toward the village.

The village? Folks in the street all looking at him? He had not thought of that, but it was too late now, for he was only sure of his balance while he was going right along.

Mrs. Moore, looking out of an upper front window, as Si went through the gate, exclaimed:

"Oh, Si! Dear me! Why, it has run away with him! I hope he won't be hurt!"

Katie Vrooman, just setting out on an errand to the village, stood still on the stoop and clapped her hands.

"There!" she said. "It didn't take Si a minute to know how! I can learn if he can! I will, too!"

Tom Clark's mother had been very good to him that morning, and had agreed to let him off for the entire day, to do as he pleased, but one of her younger women boarders knew how to ride. It was therefore that young woman and not Tom who was at this moment remounting at the top of the hill, while Tom followed afar, on foot and very warm. She rode well, and she knew as well as Si did that the village was before her, but lo! away down the street was a drove of cattle. Si had a very curious sensation when he caught his first glimpse of the heads and horns which arose out of a cloud of dust not so very far ahead of him, but the thought which came to him was:

"If I can reach the turn first I can dodge them. I guess I know how to turn. If I should get in among then I should never get out."

No kind of cavalry would care to charge a drove of cattle. The young woman on Tom's wheel turned pale when she saw them at a distance, but she also knew how to turn the machine she had borrowed, and there was the Vrooman gate, wide open, not very far ahead at her left.

"What a drove it is!" muttered Si, as he put in his best muscle. "I'll get there first. No, there's

a big ox—two of 'em—three—beyond the corner! Hear 'em bellow! What a dust! Oh, dear!"

It was a narrow street that turned to the left and then ran almost parallel with the main street, but its further corner was now a jam of beef on foot. Driven cattle are apt to be in a bad temper, and these were showing it. The long-legged, brindled fellow playing leader must have taken offence at Si, for down went his head, furiously, and he plunged forward with a hoarse, angry bellow just as Si's heart made a jump for his mouth at the other corner.

"I can steer it!" he shouted, the next second. "Easy as a boat! He missed me!" That was all, for as the brindled bull went by, his long sharp horn nearly grazed the light circle of the wheel he supposed to be charging against him.

Other angry creatures were close behind the bull as he galloped on past Si, but Tom Clark was feeling better in a moment afterward.

"There!" he said. "She's ridden right into the Vrooman place. Guess I can get it, now. 'Twas the cattle scared her. I want my wheel!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the young woman, as she dismounted. "Do look! They're dreadful!"

"Why," said Katie, "I'm glad our gate was open. I guess they are dreadful! But, oh, don't I wish I knew how!"

"Easiest thing in the world," she said. "It's Tom Clark's wheel. I only took it to see how it would go. I'll show you."

When Tom reached the gate the advance guard of the drove was so near it that he had a double excuse for going in, but he had no better prospect for recovering his wheel. The best he could do right away was to look on while Katie Vrooman discovered the difficulty there is in getting the hang of a safety bicycle, even on the smoothest walk. He did enjoy it, a little, or he would have done so, if Katie had not told him of Si's success.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Tom. "What, did he get right on board of her and sail away? He'll upset—you see if he doesn't!"

"He won't care," said Katie. "Everybody has to be upset, when they're beginning. But I'm so glad you have kept your promise and brought it up here for me to learn how."

The young woman who had brought it was flustered, just a little, but Tom was not, for he replied, at once:

"She rides, beautifully! She said she had some shopping to do, in the village. I'm to carry home her parcels, when she gets through."

"Well, Tom," said the young woman, "I'll leave it here, then, with you and Miss Vrooman.

Now the cattle have gone by I can go right along."

"So much obliged to you for bringing it," said Mrs. Vrooman, just behind her, and there, too, was the captain himself, all bows and smiles, but not exactly sure what he ought to say to a young lady wheeler. So he said:

"You got into port just in time, ma'am. Things looked squally. I'd rather steer a Liverpool liner in a gale than one of those shore propellers. I noticed that Si's craft yawed badly when he stood out, but he got her before the wind nicely."

Perhaps she understood it all. Tom and Katie did. At all events, they had made sure of the wheel, and the young woman was very gracious to Mrs. Vrooman and the captain. But she went on her way at once, and they did not hear her say, for she only thought it:

"Oh, dear me! That boy Tom! There was nothing to do but to let them keep it! They all expected it of me. I had one good ride."

Katie did not, although her father held her up on one side and her mother on the other, and although Tom did his best to make her believe she could do it.

"It capsizes, every tack," said the captain, as Katie's last and best success pitched her in among a thick growth of hollyhocks.

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Katie, as he lifted her, while Tom raised the wheel. "It's just too bad! I know I can! Why, Si Moore mounted his wheel and went right off!"

There was no one to tell her what other wheels he had mounted beforetimes, whenever he found an opportunity, nor that he was even now dismounting, breathless and very warm, with the help of the Lander side-yard fence. He had done his best, but he felt, from head to foot, the fact that he was not used to it, and that his first race on that wheel had been a sharp one.

"Hullo, Si! Is that you?" shouted the squire, from the walk in front of the shop. "Got a wheel? Come on in. I want to show you something better'n any wheel."

"I'll bring it right in," replied Si, and in a half minute more he was telling his friend the story of it, including the cattle.

"I've been tinkering at some improvements on bicycles," said the inventor, after a careful study of Si's prize. "But I haven't made any of them work, yet. Come into the shop. I'll show you, first, what you and I did the other day."

"Going to blow up something?" asked Si.

"'Tisn't pugnite, this time," chuckled the squire,

as Si stared around the shop. "But don't you remember I was melting copper?"

"Well, no," said Si, thoughtfully. "You said, when you poured it out, it was going to be brass."

"Better than that!" shouted the inventor. "Did you ever hear of Egypt and the pyramids?"

"Guess I have," replied Si. "There's a big piece of a mummy in Captain Vrooman's boat-house. It's his head, 'balmed to keep."

"Well," said Squire Lander, "those old Egyptians, like that mummy, made copper tools that would cut granite."

"But our copper won't cut," said Si.

"We forgot how to harden it," continued the inventor. "Now, see here. See that copper chisel shaver! Sharp as a razor! I cut stone with that other, and it didn't turn its edge."

"Did you boil it down, or how?" asked Si.

"I put in something, when it was hot," exclaimed Squire Lander. "Now, if I can find out what it was, and how I did it, I can do it again. Greatest invention!"

"Father 'd say it was luck," suggested Si, "if you can't do it again."

"There isn't any such thing as luck," exclaimed the squire. "It's the way all great discoveries are made. We were trying experiments——"

"That's what he means," replied Si. "He says no man ever had any luck, worth a cent, unless he worked for it."

"Some men are born rich," remarked the squire, doubtfully. "What's that?"

"Father says it's the worst kind of luck for some fellows. Just loads 'em down, so they don't amount to anything."

"I guess he's right about that," replied the inventor, "but see it cut! I'm going to keep on experimenting till I find out the secret. The Egyptians knew a great deal, but they didn't know how to fly."

"Guess they didn't have any bicycles, either," said Si; but the inventor was taking something out of a box, and in a moment more he held it up and said:

"There! How would you like to fly?"

"I've seen a balloon," said Si, "but they can't steer a balloon. The wind takes it."

"Birds go anywhere," said the squire. "I'm inventing a bird."

"Don't believe that thing could fly over a fence," said Si, but he was speaking low and his eyes were sparkling, for the thing in Squire Lander's hand had a pair of gauzy looking wings, and he was winding up something in what was evidently the body of it.

"It winds like a watch," said Si. "That makes me think. There's the queerest kind of old clock in our garret. It's taller than a man—more'n a foot—two feet. Do you s'pose it'll go?"

"I can make any clock go," said the squire. "Bring it to me. I like to tinker old clocks. Now! See?"

"You've strung it on a wire," said Si, but his mouth remained open as he watched, for the wings flapped regularly, and away went the squire's flyer, to the other end of the shop, and there it stuck, still fluttering, against the wall.

"The next thing 'll be to make it carry its own weight and go without any wire," said the squire. "I can do it. But you mustn't tell anybody what I show you. I don't want them to know until the invention is perfected. I'll shut it up now. By-and-by, you'll ride one of them as easily as you can a bicycle."

"I must take mine home, now," said Si, but when he walked out of the shop he felt somewhat as if his own machinery needed oiling.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, the next moment. "If that isn't Tom! Tom!"

"I got away," shouted back Tom, "but Katie Vrooman lamed herself. I can't stop, now. Miss Murdoch's waiting for me at Shaler's store. She

can ride it home. Then I want to see if I can run your wheel."

"I'm going to walk it there, then," said Si. "Best wheel I ever saw."

"You must have had a time, steering it through that drove o' cattle," shouted Tom, as he wheeled away. "I wouldn't have ridden among 'em for anything."

At that moment two women stood on the Vrooman piazza.

"I'm real glad Katie wasn't much hurt," said Mrs. Moore. "She'd better have Si tell her how. He rode right off."

"He knows the knack of it," replied Mrs. Vrooman. "But, then, Si isn't any ordinary boy. The captain says that a boy that can handle a boat as Si can is fit to steer a bicycle or anything else."

Si was not answering her, but he was saying:

"I don't believe old Lander could steer one of those birds. I know I couldn't."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAPTAIN'S YARN.

THE rest of Monday was quiet time, so far as Si was concerned. There was more of expectation in it than of anything else, excepting an ache in his legs which now and then made him think about bicyles. He reached home, with his own, without having been seen too much, for he had led it all the way around Eastwood, by the northerly edges of the village. He knew, too, that Tom had returned to the Cove, for he saw a young woman ride a safety wheel as far as Vrooman's and leave it there, and it was only a few minutes before Tom himself made a call at the Vrooman's and then came over to see Si.

"I told her I'd teach her how," said Tom, "but she said she didn't feel like taking another lesson to-day. I'll go home. The new boat 'll be here to-morrow."

What between boat and bicycle, Si cared only a

little whether the swamp was drying or not, and he was all the while looking forward to something else that he believed was about to come.

It was to come next morning, by a kind of special appointment, and Si went across the road, not long after the sun of Tuesday was well up and at work. As a shore-boy, with sea-going people for neighbors, Si knew a great deal about ships and their crews, and the division of men and officers on shipboard into "watches." He knew how each watch, when its turn came, had to "tumble up on deck," no matter what the weather might be, by night or day, and he remarked:

"Now the captain's at home, he's having prime good weather for his morning watches. Guess he'd be just as well off, even if it should blow a little."

If one thing was plainer than another, it was that Si's curiosity had been stirred up to fever heat concerning the boat-house museum, the boat itself, its dummy crew and the story which belonged to it all. It made up one of the queerest things that any fellow could think of, and he was wondering, now, if the captain would really tell him, right out, all there was to tell and how it came to be so.

Si did not actually go on tip-toe up the oyster-shell walk from the gate, but he certainly did step lightly. Nevertheless, when he reached the boat-

house door the captain knew he was there, for he shut up his book, lifted his head and hailed him heartily.

"Good-morning, Si," he said. "Come in. I feel just like it, somehow. Get right over into the boat and sit down. There, I turned up that bucket for you to sit on, so as not to disturb the men."

They were all sitting there, three on a side, and Si did not say a word, but he got in at once, with a queer feeling that something was coming. He did not precisely expect the boat to sail away through the open door, with Captain Vrooman steering her, but he was not at all surprised when he heard him say:

"Now, Si, you never were at sea? Well, I'm going to take you to sea with me, now."

"That's it," said Si, as he settled himself on the bucket, almost touching two of the crew. "That's what I came for. I'd just like to go."

At the same time, he was looking hard at the captain, and thought he had never before noticed what a man he was, so hardy and determined-looking, as if he were fit to do almost anything.

"It isn't so very long a yarn," he said, but then he paused and seemed to be thinking for a moment, and Si asked:

"It's all about the boat, isn't it?"

"Well, yes," replied the captain, "it's about the boat, but then it doesn't begin in her. Katie was only a little bit of a girl—— "

"Were she and Mrs. Vrooman living here, then?"

"Oh, yes, we always lived here. But this part of the house wasn't built. I've improved the whole place, every year. The 'Madagascar' had just been built, too—built away up in Maine—and I was to be her first mate. I'd never commanded a ship, but I'd been at sea all my life, and I'd laid up something. That was how I came to have a venture of my own."

"What's that?" asked Si.

"A venture?" said the captain. "Well, you've got to get ready to make ventures yourself. On a general trading voyage, going anywhere, they do a little trading on their own account. Some ships' owners say that a captain who has something more than his pay to lose will take better care of the ship."

"I guess I'd have a venture," said Si. "I'd make something every time."

"I thought I was going to, that time," said the captain. "Oh, but she was a good boat, that 'Madagascar'! Too good to throw away. She was right and tight and tidy, and she was a pretty fast sailer."

"She wasn't a steamer?" asked Si.

"No. She was a three-master—a bark—and we

sailed from New York for Rio. You know where that is?"

"South America!" said Si, proud of his geography. "River at the mouth of it."

"That's it," said the captain. "Rignt at the mouth of the river. Well, we had a cargo for Rio, and we expected to come back with coffee, but we didn't come. It was just one of the oddest things you ever saw. You don't know where you are going, after you get to sea. The cargo we found at Rio was for San Francisco. All the way 'round the Horn——"

"Lower end of South America!" said Si, for he was getting very wide awake, and he was watching the course that ship was going. She was a rover.

"Lower end? I guess it is!" replied the captain. "It's the worst place any ship was ever in. Why, if it hadn't been for a storm that drove us too far, we'd have gone through the Straits of Magellan instead of around the Horn. But the captain was a careful man. He was too careful, altogether. Perfect old tyrant, too, but I didn't guess he was a coward till we were off the Horn. Now, Si, my boy, a coward is dead sure to go wrong. That's part of my yarn. You'll see, before I get through——"

"But you didn't get wrecked against the Horn, did you?" asked Si.

"No!" growled the captain. "But I thought he'd run us against the South Pole and wreck us among the icebergs. Well, Si, my boy, we got around the Horn, at last. Then we sailed along up and we did some trading at the west-coast ports; Chili, Peru, and so on; but I mustn't stop there or it'll make it too long. We couldn't get through before breakfast. I want to get to San Francisco——"

"So do I!" exclaimed Si. "You did get there? That's one of the places I mean to go to one of these days."

"Tip-top place," said the captain; "but we only stayed there long enough to fit up and take on another cargo. We shipped a lot of new men, too, and if we didn't pick up a queer lot! Why, Si, about half of them were just fit to be pirates."

"Pirates!" exclaimed Si, and he was hitching around uneasily on his seat, for he had a queer feeling as if the six dummies were beginning to lean forward and listen to the captain's yarn. This must have been the place where they joined the ship and began to belong to the story. "Pirates? They didn't make a pirate of the 'Madagascar,' did they?"

"Well, no," replied the captain. "They didn't have and chance, but when we sailed for Japan I began to wish we had another skipper, before we

were two days out. He was afraid of his crew, and it made a brute of him. How he did treat those men! Why, Si, there isn't anything else so cruel as a coward. You see he wants to make other men afraid of him, and there isn't a bit of use in it. Not one of 'em was afraid of me, and I could get more out of 'em than he could."

Perhaps Si's foot had jostled the nearest dummy, at his right, but it nodded just then as if agreeing with the captain.

"Of course," thought Si, aloud. "Any fellow would have stepped around lively if you ordered him. I would."

"They stepped lively," laughed the captain; "but they'd have had a tougher time under that old tiger, if we hadn't had the best, easiest kind of sailing weather."

"Oh," said Si, looking a little disappointed at hearing about good weather. "Then you didn't get wrecked, after all. But did those fellows turn pirate, themselves?"

Si had no idea how completely he had forgotten that he was only a boy, but then the captain himself seemed to have entirely forgotten it, too.

"Pirate?" he said. "No, but they came pretty near mutineering, half a dozen times. They kept me on the lookout day and night, for fear some-

thing would happen. There wasn't any half dozen of them, though, that were of the same nation, and they couldn't trust each other. Chinese, Lascars, Malays, Germans, Spaniards, English, Irish, Sandwich Islanders, and I don't know what. The Pacific is a wonderful ocean to gather all kinds of men. They used to quarrel awfully among themselves. After a while, Captain Jekyl hardly dared go forward among them, but they all seemed to like me pretty well, even after I knocked them down."

"Did you have to?" almost gasped Si, as he saw the captain's right hand clinch a little tightly, as if it remembered hitting.

"Of course I did," said the captain, carelessly. "Every skipper, or mate, either, must be ready to knock them down, but he mustn't do it unless it's a knock they can see a need for. If they feel that it was all right, they're satisfied, but if it wasn't, why then it's likely to make them revengeful and mutinous."

"It would me," muttered Si. "I never was knocked down, in all my life."

"Well," said the captain, "you will be, some day. Every fellow gets his knock-downs, of one kind or another. We were all going to get a big one, that very voyage, but we weren't thinking of it, and it didn't come until we were almost there."

"Sandwich Islands?" suggested Si.

"No," said the captain; "we only ran into Honolulu and ran out again. We didn't stay there three days. Then we went on across the Pacific, going free with fine weather, good winds, everything lovely, until we were only a few days out from Nagasaki."

He saw that Si was puzzled a little and was staring at the nearest dummy as if asking him where that might be. The dummy's head nodded sharply for the breeze blew through so that the sail jerked, every now and then, and they were all more or less disturbed as the yarn went on.

"That's Japan," explained the captain, "but we were not to go there, that trip. The good weather ended in the rippingest kind of storm. Sudden, too. You never saw such a storm along this coast. It was what they call a cyclone, and it'll blow a ship almost out of the water—or under it."

"That was what wrecked her!" exclaimed Si.

"Hold on!" laughed the captain. "That was what wrecked our skipper! Why, that cyclone scared him almost to death. So it did more than half the men. There isn't much real grit in that kind of men, anyhow. The worst brutes I ever saw had the least real courage. Some pretty good men haven't much, that's true, and some half-way

bad men have a great deal, but an out-and-out savage 'll get cowed and limp and worthless, just when you wouldn't think it. They've all superstitions, too, and those ruffians of ours had shipped an idea that the 'Madagascar' had lost her luck. She hadn't been an unlucky boat, either."

"Father says that some men are always unlucky," remarked Si. "They won't work, and they won't think about what they're doing."

"He's right," said the captain. "I know what he means. He thinks the secret of good luck is to plan ahead and work hard and be on hand at the right time. There isn't any superstition in that. I believe in it, myself. Always did. But a man who really believes in luck is apt to be an awful coward when his luck breaks down. Ours didn't, according to my notion, and the 'Madagascar' didn't, but Captain Jekyl and his pirate crew broke down, just when the cyclone was blowing over, almost."

"Did they give up and run her ashore?" asked Si.

"Why, no," said the captain. "We were safe enough, so far as any shore was concerned. We were hundreds of miles at sea. We didn't know exactly where we were. I don't know, to this day, just how far that cyclone drove us, but I do believe we wouldn't have been in any great danger, from

that time on. The captain did, though, and it was a fact that our masts were gone, and that the crew wouldn't man the pumps, leak or no leak. They said, too, that he was a Jonah, and that they ought to throw him overboard."

"Did they?" sprang from Si's tongue, as the captain paused and seemed to be looking dreamily away toward the distant sea where he had left the "Madagascar."

"No," said the captain. "I wouldn't have allowed them to do that, but he managed to put us all overboard. He said we must take to the boats, for the ship was going down. I didn't believe she was, but I couldn't help myself. All I could do was to get my boat ready."

"Was it this boat?" asked Si.

"This very boat," replied the captain. "He kind of hated me. So he made me take the smallest boat and put off first, with the six that he thought were the worst of the men."

Si glanced all around at the crew, and they nodded, nodded, as the boat rocked, but Captain Vrooman pointed at them, one by one, and said:

"Those two forward are English. We called them Sandy and Bitts. Worst men you ever saw! That big Chinaman, without any queue, is Chin Lee. I believed he was a Black Flag fellow, from

the pirate coast of China. Right next to you, on the right, is Koniolano. He's a Sandwich Islander of the old sort. Cannibal."

"Oh!" shuddered Si, but the nodding dummy wore the same grin he usually wore and took no offence. The captain went on:

"Right across from him is Ah Lo, and he's another kind of Chinaman. I can hardly remember ever hearing him speak. He only used to show his teeth. In the middle, there, on the left, that's Braun, and I don't think he could tell where he was born or what race he belonged to, except that he seemed to be almost a white man. He was dangerous, at any time, and he was almost as strong as I am. None of the rest could match him. The skipper believed I was getting his worst dangers out of his way."

"I wouldn't have done it!" exclaimed Si.

"A good seaman must obey his captain. Remember that!" was the slowly-uttered reply. "The last place and time for disobedience is in a storm and when other men are breaking orders. What's more, Captain Jekyl hadn't studied this boat as I had. I'd had a kind of fancy for her, all along. He didn't think of her being a kind of life-boat, perfect duck to swim. He and all the men wanted something larger. What I was looking for most

was water, and it was a good thing that I did. You'll see."

"Did the other boats get off?" asked Si.

"I saw them all go," said the captain. "I think the skipper and the best men were in the long boat. The sea was running high, though, and we had all we could do to keep this little craft from swamping. I sat right down here, at the tiller, with the six men at the oars, and I'd have given almost anything to have known just where that cyclone had left us."

"Did the Madagascar sink?" asked Si.

"I suppose she did," said Captain Vrooman, thoughtfully. "We left her. But our voyage was only just begun."

"Why, Captain," suddenly exclaimed Si, "you hadn't saved your venture, had you? Did you lose it all?"

"Every cent!" replied the captain. "I had sold out, first-rate, in San Francisco and along the coast. I hadn't anything left but a lot of cash that I meant to buy goods with in Japan and China. It was gold."

"I'd have taken it in the boat!" almost shouted Si. "I wouldn't have left it!"

"Well, no," said the captain, "not if you had been in my place. I'd had to hide it all the while,

and not one of them knew it was on the 'Madagascar.' I had the middle starboard stateroom, and I coopered a place for it against the woodwork under my bunk; down in a corner. It was the safest kind of box, but I couldn't have gone below after it then, if I'd wanted to. Besides, those six fellows would have known——"

Si glanced around at them with a shiver.

—"and I didn't feel like carrying money with me, in such company, I took another box of bread, instead. They might have thrown me overboard for the money, if it had been there, and they almost did, for the bread and water."

"But did you get ashore?" said Si.

"No, we didn't," responded the captain. "Not one man of us got ashore."

"What did become of you all?" asked Si.

He was tremendously excited, and the six dummies were all leaning forward as the boat rocked under them. They may not have been really listening, but just then a bell tinkled in the other room and the captain stood up.

"All right!" he sang out, as if answering the bell. "Si, my boy, the morning watch is up. You'll have to come and hear the rest to-morrow."

"Oh!" exclaimed Si, with a look as if he had been suddenly awakened out of a dream. "Thank

you ever so much, Captain Vrooman. I'll go home, but I want to know the whole of it—what became of your men, and all the rest, and the 'Madagascar.'"

"You shall have it," said the captain. "Come over again. Morning watch. But don't you spin the yarn to anybody else. Perhaps you may, though, after you've heard the whole of it."

"I won't even tell Tom," said Si, and home he went.

All that day, however, it seemed to him as if he had been out upon the South Sea somewhere, in a boat with a lot of pirates, and that he was to sail with them again nobody knew where. It even spoiled the garret for him, and made it seem a dull, tame, dusty old place, where nothing stunning had ever happened. Nevertheless he went up there and rummaged for a while and late in the afternoon he was seen to trundle a wheelbarrow, with something in it, carefully covered over, all the way to Squire Lander's workshop. There he and the Squire unloaded the wheelbarrow and the inventor at once declared:

"Of course I can! Why, Si, I can fix it up and make it go. When it's done, though, I'll show you something curious. You see if I don't!"

CHAPTER XVI.

OFF FOR FOAM ISLAND.

If it is a warm summer night, and if a fellow goes to sleep with a boat in his head, there is no telling where he may sail to. It depends upon whether or not the dream he dreams knows how to steer. Si awoke, on Wednesday morning, with a strong impression that six men in a boat were too many, and that all sorts of things might happen to such a crew. His next thought was:

"Glad father said I needn't attend to anything this morning. I'll go right over and hear the rest of that yarn."

Only a few minutes afterward he was at the door of Captain Vrooman's boat-house, and there sat the captain, all ready. He only said: "Good-morning, Si, come in."

Then there was a bit of silence, while Si stepped over into the boat and sat down, and he broke it with:

"Mother says she sent over all the other Revolutionary things to Mrs. Vrooman."

"Thank her for that," said the captain. "They are old family relics. But all our shore people were soldiers, your family and your mother's, as well as Mrs. Vrooman's and mine ——"

He might have said more about that subject, but Si was looking around at the crew of the boat and he asked:

"What became of them?"

"I'll heave ahead and tell you," promptly responded the captain. "It was just as I supposed it would be. When we left the 'Madagascar' that cyclone had done its worst. It began to die away before long, and the sea went down pretty rapidly. That danger was over, but then came on one of the deadest calms you ever saw. There wasn't a breath of air, hardly, and the sea only heaved in long swells, that the boat rode over like a nutshell. I made the men row, and I rowed, myself, and we kept regular watches. Mine was the morning watch, at first, but, it wasn't many days and nights before I had to keep them all. You see, Si, seven men eat and drink a good deal, even when you keep them on short rations, and the bread and water went, day after day."

"Was it all calm?" asked Si.

"Why, no, of course not," said the captain, "but it lasted so long that it made an awful hole in our provisions. After the wind came again I used to sit here and watch the men, and watch the sea and sky, and read—oh, I forgot to tell about that. I didn't dare to take any money into the boat, but I took this. Mrs. Vrooman gave it to me, herself, just before I joined the 'Madagascar.'"

Si knew what book it was, but he said nothing, and the captain went on:

"It was all kind of new to me, reading it in that way, although I'd read it before. There wasn't much else to do, so I read, read. Not one of the men said they could read. I think the Englishmen could, but they wouldn't, and that was all the same. Well, so I sat there, reading, and the wind blew us along, and there was less and less hardtack, and less and less water, and I knew what the men were thinking of——"

Si drew a long breath there, for he had been looking at something and he was thinking hard. Right beside the captain lay a long-barrelled navy revolver, and his brown, broad hand was resting on it now.

"I could read it in their faces, and then I heard them say it. Chin Lee and Ah Co and Koniolano could hardly keep their hands away from their

knife handles. You see they calculated that the water would last longer, and the bread, if there were fewer mouths in the boat. At last they spoke right out and talked of drawing lots, to see who should go overboard. Any one of them was ready to kill the five others and me. I told them it was all nothing but selfish cowardice, and that we must live or die together. They had knives, but they had no pistols, and they knew what I meant. I was the captain of that boat so long as she floated. —Then the water gave out." He paused there, and Si could not have spoken a word, he was listening so hard The sail had drooped and the six dummies were motionless, as if they, too, could remember how they felt when the water failed, away out there on the Pacific Ocean.

"But the wind had freshened," went on the captain, "and we were driving before it finely. That was the fourth night since I had slept, unless I had napped it a little, steering right along. I think I did, but the men didn't know it. They, themselves, hardly dared go to sleep, for fear of each other, and all their faces had grown wolfish, cruel, awful! You never saw such faces! They threatened me, of course, and each man talked to himself in his own language. Here I sat, though, all the next day, reading, and they all sat and stared at me and

at the book, and at the revolver. I don't know which they were most afraid of. You see, they were superstitious about the book. If they could have taken that away I believe they wouldn't have been half so afraid of the revolver."

"Didn't you get awfully tired and sleepy?" inquired Si.

"No, Si," said the captain. "I was and I wasn't. I didn't know how much strength a man could have in him until the next morning, when the sun rose and I saw those six savage fellows panting and panting and growing weaker, while I sat here, feeling pretty well, only that my tongue was so dry and all my throat felt so hot."

Si shivered, for he knew that none of them all got ashore, and he was half afraid to hear what was coming.

"I had been steering northward and westward," the captain went on, "and I knew that we were probably in the track of vessels, coming and going, but the next thing I saw was a sign of land——"

"Land!" exclaimed Si.

"Nothing but the blue top of a high mountain, ever so far away, and I couldn't guess what land it belonged to until I saw some things that were a good deal nearer. They were worse to see than any mountains, or even a calm, or a cyclone——"

Si's face was pale with excitement, and he was leaning forward, listening.

"Away off, westward," said the captain, "I saw something white, that I thought was the topsail of a ship, and I steered for it, but nearer, a great deal, and coming right for us, I saw three or four great, clumsy-looking sails."

"Coming to save you!" exclaimed Si.

"No, they were not," responded the captain. "They were proas, full of Malay pirates. The worst kind of savages! And then my six men mutinied, at last, because I steered right away from those Malays. All they thought of was water, and they drew their knives when I tried to explain that the Malays never spared anybody. They were clean out of their minds, but they quieted, a little, as long as I kept my revolver levelled right at them."

"Awful!" exclaimed Si.

"They yelled and shouted and threatened," said the captain, "but on we drove. Then two of them fainted away and the rest had to sit still and pant. It was toward the end of the morning watch, by that time, and I thought that most likely I should never see another, for there was a proa behind us and one on either side, nearing us, so that I couldn't tack or dodge."

Si arose and sat down again and he was breathing a little hard, but the captain went on :

"Didn't this boat skim, though ! Such a clipper for a life-and-death race ! I just loved her, as she sprang away. But we were almost before the wind and the sail hid that quarter from me, so I couldn't see what was coming. There had been, out there, a swifter racer than any proa, and she had eaten up the distance while I was watching the Malays and keeping an eye on my crazy men. I heard it !"

"Heard what ?" exclaimed Si.

"Boom ! Boom !" shouted the captain. "The report of heavy guns ! And I saw one shot fall into the water, and there was a yell, next, for the second shot struck the nearest proa amidships and knocked it almost in two."

"Hurrah !" burst from Si.

"Even my men, two that could not lift their heads nor speak, tried to hurrah, but they fell back and lay there. I steered on, with the boat dancing a jig under me, until it seemed as if right out from behind our own sail there swept the most beautiful, heavenly thing you ever saw."

"Oh !" but Si chuckled to himself.

"So beautiful ! And her sails were all set, and they seemed like wings, and away up, up, up there, against the sky it floated, the Stars and Stripes."

"Hurrah!" shouted Si, with all his might.

"It was the United States man-of-war 'Oundiaga', on a cruise against pirates."

"Did they reach you in time?" asked Si.

"Did they get us?" exclaimed Captain Vrooman. "Why, I didn't know what came next, except that I heard more guns, and then a sound of oars, and a voice that said, 'Boat ahoy!' The next I really know was when I awoke in a bunk and knew I was in a stateroom on board the 'Oundiaga'."

"Could you speak?" asked Si.

"Well, yes," replied the captain. "I said, 'I hope they saved my boat,' and the ship's surgeon, that was watching me, laughed right out. Said he, 'She's all right. Captain Willoughby had her hoisted on board. Prime cutter. You'll do well enough. Your men are all right, too, and they say you're a trump. But the leftenant had to fetch your Bible. Not one of those fellows would come near it. They said you steered by it till you met the "Oundiaga".'"

"What did you say?" asked Si.

"Why," replied Captain Vrooman, "I told him that was about what I had made up my mind that I was going to do all my life. It was a prime good compass to steer by. But, Si, don't you see? We didn't get ashore. We got on board a ship. Her

next port was Hong Kong, China, and there I got a birth as mate of a tea-ship for New York. I brought my boat with me and I named her the 'Sarah'—that was Mrs. Vrooman's name—and now you know why I roofed her over. She is too big to put into a glass case. That last morning watch, though, Si, with all of us dying of thirst, and with the Malay pirates almost near enough to shoot! Si——"

"Father," said Kate in the sitting-room doorway, "didn't you hear the bell? It's breakfast."

"I declare!" exclaimed the captain. "What I was listening for was the bell of the 'Oundiaga'."

"Oh!" exclaimed Si. "Well! Thank you ever so much. I'll go home. But, Captain, what became of the 'Madagascar', and of all the rest of them?"

"I never heard a word of Captain Jekyl, nor of any of the men with him, nor of the ship. My six men got well soon enough. They were all at sea before I left Hong Kong."

"I'd like to see 'em," said Si, as he got out of the boat, and the dummies nodded at him, like old acquaintances.

"Si," said the captain, "one thing more. Go home and get your breakfast. Then go and get Tom, and come and meet me just above the pier, in the Cove, at about eight o'clock. There is some-

thing the matter there. I don't know exactly what it is until I see it."

"We'll be there!" said Si. "Guess we will;" but he obeyed orders and set out for his own breakfast table.

Eight o'clock? Well, that was Captain Vrooman's idea. He was a seasoned old sailor and he couldn't wait. He knew how. Long before eight o'clock, however, there were two boys patrolling the pier and the shore of the Cove above the pier. They were not seen to stand still, anywhere, but seemed rather to be taking all kinds of different views of something that sat there, out on the water, at anchor, nodding and winking and beckoning to them. They knew every boat that belonged in Vrooman's Cove, and this was a new-comer. It was remarkable that the entire shore population had not come crowding down to the beach for a look at so pretty a boat as that. She was fast looking and graceful, and evidently capable of standing the roughest kind of weather. She was the safest boat they had ever seen. They said that. And she was just right for two boys to handle, although she was really large for a boat of her build and apparent size. No danger of her tipping over. Best kind of boat!

"You could sail a boat like that right out to sea," exclaimed Tom, loudly, at last.

"I guess so," laughed a very hearty voice, just behind them. "I've sailed a thousand miles of sea in a boat no bigger than that is."

"Captain Vrooman," said Si, eagerly, "is that really our boat?"

"That's the 'Nautilus,'" replied the captain. "I'll bring her in and we'll all get aboard and give her a trial trip. I want to see if she is all they say she is."

"Si," whispered Tom, "look behind you. She wants to say something."

Si turned and there was Katie Vrooman, but she could not have become so flushed and excited about the "Nautilus," even if she meant to go sailing in her. He thought so, and he was just going to say something when she whispered, sharply:

"Si, the 'Wanderer' is to sail regularly between New York and Liverpool for a while. Father got a letter just now. Mother and I are going to England in her. Oh, how I want to go!"

"So do I," said Si. "But look at that boat! If your father 'll let me I'll sail her straight for Foam Island and see that wreck."

"You and Tom can go," said Katie, "but he won't. We must hurry back to the house as soon as he has tried your boat. Mother 'll be waiting for us."

"Of course she will," said Si, "but you won't start for Europe right away, will you?"

"I don't know when," began Katie, but she paused there.

The captain had unhitched the shore line and was pulling the "Nautilus" in, while all the rest, including a number of new arrivals, gathered behind him.

The Cove men and boys were ready to take an interest in a new boat at any time.

"Si!" exclaimed Tom, "here comes old Lander. Miss Lander, too. He's got something."

"Captain Vrooman," sang out the inventor, at that moment, "here I am, but you mustn't keep me out too long. I'll only stay to see what that boat amounts to, but if we happen to upset her, I'm ready!"

It might have been a bundle of old clothes that he carried under his arm, but nobody inquired what it was. Perhaps nobody cared, for in came the "Nautilus," and they were all making remarks about her shape and rig and her paint and finishing. That is, all excepting Si and Tom, for they stepped into her at once, without speaking a word, the moment her nose touched the beach. Katie seemed to go on board almost the same instant, and the next sailor shipped for the trial trip of the "Nautilus" was Squire Lan-

der himself, followed closely by his daughter Margaret. Mr. Saunders came next, and he was evidently criticising the new craft with the eye of a professional boatman.

"Boys," he said, "she may do, but she doesn't begin to be the boat that the 'Sea Lion' was. Nothing like her!"

"Well," said Tom, "the 'Sea Lion' was a tip-top boat, but——"

"Tom!" exclaimed Saunders, "she could outleak this or any other boat along shore. If you want a boat that can leak, worth a cent, you've got to take something that's seen more service than this has."

"I guess so," said Si, but he was watching Squire Lander, and the inventor was very busy.

"There!" he exclaimed, puffing a little more because he had already been puffing so exceedingly hard. "I've blown up two of my patent call-for-help life-preservers. Now I'll go to work on the cushions. If we should get an opportunity to upset and try them——"

"Father!" almost screamed Maggie, "Oh, don't! I don't want to try them!"

"Si won't upset us," laughed Captain Vrooman. "He's going to steer. Take the tiller, Si."

Si had been more than a little upset without going

overboard. He blushed tremendously, but the sail was now up, the breeze had caught it, and an order from the captain had to be obeyed. He stepped to the stern, therefore, begging pardon of Katie and Maggie for passing them.

"All alive!" suddenly commanded the captain, but the moment Si's hand was on the tiller, with a good grip, a change came over him. He was another boy. He looked at the sail, at the water, and he said:

"Let her out a little, captain. The wind's right for a good run."

Saunders winked at Captain Vrooman, and the latter brought his hand down on his own knee, exclaiming:

"There, Si, there goes your bashfulness. All gone —soon as you began to steer! Don't you see? It's a kind of cowardice. As long as you think about yourself you'll be bashful and stupid and blunder into everything. As soon as you think of what you're doing, or ought to do, it'll all go. Never be a coward!"

"I won't," said Si, pretty red in the face. "But a fellow isn't always in a boat."

"Yes, he is," said the captain, "of one kind or another. And if he is thinking of himself too much he may swamp her in fine weather. Tell you what

though, Saunders, this is a good one. She's a clipper to go."

"Hurrah" shouted Si. "Captain, six in the crew! The same number you had."

"Now," interrupted Squire Lander, "the cushion life-preservers are expanded. We've enough to float us all. Captain, if you will get up a moment; now sit down."

Down sat Captain Vrooman heavily, upon the flattened water pumpkin shoved under him by the inventor, but he jumped up again, for nobody had ever before heard precisely such a wail as followed.

"That's it!" shouted Squire Lander; "it's the yell of a woman afraid of drowning. I made it out of the windpipe of one of the largest turkeys you ever saw."

"Oh, but can't it squawk?" said Tom.

They all agreed that it could, and the squire went on to explain the whole subject, but, all the while, the trim and graceful "Nautilus" was clipping away across the dancing sea. She went fast and far, but it seemed no time at all before the captain ordered the man at the helm:

"Home, now, Si! She's all right. Just the boat for you, boys!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded Si, but the next moment he was whispering to Tom: "Then for Foam Island, a-kiting!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A GREAT VOYAGE.

If there was one thing clearer than another, it was that Si and Tom were glad to have their new boat to themselves, although they would not have said so for anything.

"Si," said Tom, when the beach was a hundred yards behind them, after landing the captain and the rest, "let's race it!"

"That's just what she's going to do," replied Si, at the tiller. "We'll make about the quickest run to Foam Island! It's a bully good breeze."

"She's a bully good boat, too," said Tom.

They could hardly find anything good enough to say about the "Nautilus," but they were very kind, if not almost affectionate, in all their remarks about the old "Sea Lion." It would have been very mean, to their minds, to find any real fault with a fellow that had gone around with them, and fished with them, and been wrecked with them, and over whose

leaks they had done so much toilsome tinkering. That very good boat was gone now, however, and here they were in a craft that carried with it an air of being a kind of boy, as ready as they were for a swift dash across the summer sea to Foam Island.

Something as good and as new as the "Nautilus" seemed to have arrived at the Vrooman place, and the family were in the sitting-room, talking about it. That is, the captain and Mrs. Vrooman talked, and Katie seemed to be compelling herself to sit still when she was all ready and very eager to go somewhere right away.

"We must not spend too much money," she heard her father say, "but it won't cost you and Katie anything to go and come. You can go around, while you are there."

"Going around in Europe does cost money," replied Mrs. Vrooman. "But we must see all we can."

Katie heard them say it, and she heard a great deal more, but she felt as if she had a kind of telescope in her mind and was looking through it at the cities and countries to which she and her mother might sail in the next voyage of the "Wanderer."

Still, she was not altogether selfish, for she took a deep interest in some things that her father said, about Si and Tom and the Lander family.

"It wouldn't do Tom any good," remarked the captain, "but I'm going to ask Si's father and mother what they think of it. Lander wants to see what he can do with some of his patents, over there, and his wife and Maggie would be company for you."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Katie. "What will Si say when he hears about it?"

"He won't hear about it unless it's going to be so," said Mrs. Vrooman. "I think I'll go right over and see Mrs. Moore. You write your letters, Sam. I won't be gone a great while."

Off she went, and Katie seemed to be left all alone, but she was not, for she had London, and Paris, and Rome, and a whole procession of European rivers and mountains, not to speak of nations, for company. All because one great iron ocean tramp was about to make a voyage to Liverpool and then to some of the ports of the Mediterranean Sea.

Somehow or other both Tom and Si were entirely satisfied with the fact that they had forgotten to bring along any fishing tackle.

"This isn't a fishing cruise," said Si. "We are wreckers, this time."

"We'll get all the fishing we want, this vacation," replied Tom. "Now we're sure of a boat any time we want one. Tell you what, Si, we could take out parties of people and make some money."

"Well, yes, we could," said Si, "but what about your bicycle?"

"Soon as I get the lameness out," replied Tom, "I'm going to try it again. How do you feel?"

"I don't mind any lameness," said Si, "but Katie Vrooman won't have a chance to learn, if they're going to Europe. Oh, but don't I wish I could go!"

"The captain's been there before," remarked Tom. "He's been all over everywhere. He's been wrecked, too. Didn't you say he told you all about it?"

"Guess he did," said Si; but that was an opening and a beginning, for Si had been thinking of the captain's yarn as the "Nautilus" leaned over and sped along.

In a moment more Tom was crouched on the bottom before the captain and steersman of the new boat, listening to the story, as Si told it, of the "Madagascar," her crew, her voyage, and then of the wonderful boat cruise among the calms and storms of the Pacific that ended so well among the Malay pirates and a Yankee man-of-war.

"That's just the way it ought to have come out!" shouted Tom, at the end of it. "I knew it would come out, somehow, or else Captain Vrooman couldn't have brought his boat home. But I almost gave 'em all up, once or twice."

"So did I," said Si. "You ought to have heard

him tell it, instead of me. Hullo, Tom! Here we are! Don't let's land at this end of the island. Let's go all the way around and run in by the wreck."

"That's it," said Tom. "Who wants to wade across all that sand?"

On dashed the Nautilus, leaning over as the freshening breeze drove her faster and faster, and there, under her lee, lay the sand-hills and bushes and rocks of Foam Island.

"We've been there often enough," said Si, "and it's a great place for clams, but I never had a good look at a wreck. Did you, Tom?"

"Of course I have," said Tom. "But I never went all over one. This is such a big one, too. They're coming to break her up to-morrow or next day."

The fact that this was their last chance may have accounted for their haste, but there was really no danger that the wreck would get away. They rounded the southeasterly shoulder of the island, and down went the sail of the Nautilus.

If the wind had been blowing another way they could not have sculled in, as they did, nor have hitched their boat safely at the stern of the stranded vessel.

"They say," remarked Si, "that she was about used up, away out at sea, and came through the

Sound for safety. Then a storm took her and here she is."

"Glad of it," said Tom, as if, in his opinion, she had gone around the ocean long enough and had landed there for the express benefit of him and Si.

They could make out her name on the battered woodwork of her stern, and knew that she had been the "Rover." She was so yet, all that was left of but she would do no more roving, and the two young wreckers clambered eagerly on board.

"There isn't any cargo in her," said Si, "but let's look everywhere. Lots of other people have visited her. Mrs. Bronson and Miss Keyser said there were six staterooms and she could have carried passengers."

Tom did not feel like talking, and it was enough to make any fellow feel serious, a little, to see such a ship as that gone all to ruin. It was a great lesson of the sea and of its perils. Even the stumps of the masts seemed to hold up themselves as examples of what could be done for stout timbers by too much wind.

"Hullo!" suddenly shouted Si, a few minutes after they went below, and as he was poking and peering around in the forward part of the wreck. "Tom! Come here! Look at this!"

Tom scrambled forward rapidly, for Si's voice sounded as if something had happened.

"What is it? Have you found something?" he asked, as he saw Si stooping forward and steadying himself against the remnant of a plank bulkhead.

The "Rover" lay among the rocks firmly, but she was not standing up, and there was slope enough in the flooring Tom walked on to account for his sitting down so sharply to hear Si's answer.

"Look!" said Si. "Read that! Some fellow cut it into that plank. I guess it used to be the name of her! She wasn't always called the "Rover!"

Tom could read even better sitting than standing, for the rude letters may have been carved by a sailor sitting down:

"MADAGASKR."

"Don't you see?" shouted Si. "He didn't know how to spell it right. It's the old 'Madagascar!' It's the ship that Captain Vrooman was in. Somebody found her, floating around, after he and the rest of 'em left her. Here she is! Whoop! Now I know what to do!"

Tom lingered for another study of those rude but tell-tale letters, but Si was at once hurrying aft as fast as he could scramble.

"I remember what the captain said," he whispered, as if it were a secret. "He had the middle starboard stateroom. There's an old handspike. That's what I want. It's under his bunk, all coop-

ered in with wood. I don't believe anybody ever dreamed of hunting for it. Oh, if it's there!"

His hands trembled as he picked up the rusty bar of iron and his face was pale with excitement, but Tom was even cool about it, for he was remarking:

"May be it's the same ship and may be it isn't. Captain Vrooman can't make anything out of her, anyhow. She never belonged to him and she's sure wrecked this time. What is the matter with Si? What is he pounding at?"

Thump! Thump! Splinter! Crash!

There was quite a racket making in that middle starboard stateroom, while Tom worked his way aft to see what the skipper of the "Nautilus" was trying to do.

"I believe that's the place," said Si, as he drove his handspike harder against what seemed a small bit of corner boxing under the bunk. "Safest place on board. But didn't he screw it in solid! No fellow could steal in and get it out in a hurry. He used screws because he didn't want them to hear any hammering.

If that was Captain Vrooman's job it had been well done, but at last Si got a good pry with his long bar, there was a tug, a strain, and off came the cover of that hiding-place.

Si hardly dared to look. He had a curious feeling

There was a tug, a strain, and off came the cover of that hiding-place.

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that he was a kind of burglar or pirate, or at least that he was prying into the secret treasure-box of somebody or other—he was not quite sure of whom it might be. Still he stooped and groped in and began to draw out something.

"Found it!" he shouted, hoarsely. "Tom! I've found Captain Vrooman's fortune!"

"Haul it out!" said Tom. "But you ain't sure it's his. May be it isn't."

"Nobody, else hid anything under this bunk," responded Si. "There! Bag of gold. He said so. Another bag. Why, Tom, he told me it was more'n ten thousand dollars. All he'd made in a long time. Oh, but won't he be glad to get it back again!"

"Ain't it heavy, though?" gasped Tom, as he tested the weight of one of the bags. "Si, there ain't any more, is there?"

"Can't be," said Si, "and we must put for home with this. Won't I sail that boat carefully? I guess I will."

"You take one," said Tom. "I can carry the other. Don't let's wait a minute."

They handled those bags as if they were afraid of them, and when they reached the deck of the "Rover," that once upon a time had been the "Madagascar," they looked anxiously in all directions.

"There are boats out," said Si, as if he were an-

swering the questions on Tom's face, "but I don't believe they are coming here. They might, though. We haven't any time to spare. Glad it's only you and me. You needn't tell anybody."

"Not if the captain doesn't want us to," said Tom. "But I guess he won't care, after we hand it over to him."

No doubt the "Nautilus" was better ballasted after those two bags were stowed under her middle seat, and she should have been a safer boat for it, but Si did not handle her by any means as daringly as when he sailed for Foam Island. She was a treasure-ship now, and she could take no risks. What was more, she must give a wide berth to any other craft. There were no pirates on Long Island Sound, of course, but the "Nautilus" need not make any acquaintances on her first day out. Her present duty was to run home as fast as a careful and even nervous skipper could sail her.

"It's kind of awful," said Tom, as they made their last tack and ran for the Cove. "I never felt so in all my life."

"We're almost there now," replied Si, "and then we've got to lug it home without letting anybody know what it is."

"That'll be a tough thing to do," said Tom, but he was mistaken, for he had not consulted with Si.

Not at the Cove beach, nor at the pier, nor at any anchorage where other boats might be—or any curious, inquiring eyes—did the "Nautilus" propose to land her precious and mysterious cargo. She turned her saucy head towards Vrooman's Point and ran in under the shadow of the crag that some old people still spoke of as Vrooman's nose.

"Bully!" exclaimed Tom, as he stepped ashore. "But what'll we say to fellows we meet in the road going home?"

"We won't meet any," returned Si. "We'll cut across Sampson's land to the gap in the ridge, and through our place, and we needn't meet a soul."

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom. "I feel better'n I did. We can do it."

Any stout young fellow can lift a bag that only weighs fifteen pounds troy. Perhaps he can put it upon his shoulder and say that it doesn't weigh so very much, but if the day is a little warm and if the bag contains gold, the troy weight shortly turns into avoirdupois, and then there comes a sagging downward pressure and a disposition to change shoulders and to take rests. It was when the boys were resting for a moment at the gap in the ridge, after having crossed Sampson's land courageously, that Tom suddenly sprang to his feet shouting:

"Si! There he comes! Get a club! We can't do anything with him!"

He had heard a savage barking, then a kind of yell rather than yelp, and now here was Tiger running after them at his best gait and with a growl at every jump. Even Si felt a little uncertain, but Tom exclaimed again:

"Run! I'm going to. We can come back after the bags."

"No, I won't," said Si, as Tom sprang away. "Tige! Come here!"

"Woof!" replied Tiger, but he did not come. He paused and whined and sat down.

"Come, Tige," said Si, and Tom shouted from several rods away:

"What's the matter with him?"

"Matter?" responded Si, laughing. "I know. Here's where the rock burst almost under him. He won't come any nearer. Come and get your bag!"

"Woof," said Tige, but in another moment he was marching ahead of them toward the Moore house, as if he had been hired to guard two treasure-bearers, and was ready to fight any fellow that might meddle with him.

During all that time, while the "Nautilus" was going and returning, and while her skipper and crew were toiling homeward overland, there had

been changes of pretty important kinds. One of them had taken all the old crew out of Captain Vrooman's boat and stowed them away.

"There," he said to his wife, as they and Katie stood by the empty boat. "I've sailed with those fellows long enough. Besides, we must get the house in order for other people to take care of it while we are gone. I don't know how soon my sailing orders may come."

"Father," exclaimed Katie, in the doorway, "do come and look. Si and Tom. They are bringing something heavy. And it's Tige——"

"Sampson's dog!" said Mrs. Vrooman. "Well, he and Si are good friends——"

In through the gate marched Si and Tom, and in a moment more they lowered their burdens to the floor of the boathouse. Katie had been so ready to tell something that she spoke at once:

"Oh, Si! your father says you may, and your mother says you may, and you are going! Isn't it splendid! Tom can have the 'Nautilus' all to himself——"

Si, too, had been so full of his own errand that he could hardly hear about anything else.

"There!" he said. "Captain Vrooman, we found it, just where you stuck it away. That wreck on Foam Island used to be the 'Madagascar!'"

"Oh, father!" said Katie: but the captain himself stood as still as a post, looking down at the bags, and nobody else more than breathed for a moment.

"Si," he said, at length, a little slowly, as if he were trying to be very cool about it, "that's so. There they are. I always knew she wasn't sinking. Anybody had a right to pick her up and tow her to port. I declare! Katie, you and your mother may go anywhere you please. We needn't be so careful what it costs."

Mrs. Vrooman could have said more than she did just then, if Katie had not been hugging her so enthusiastically, but Si went right along with a more full account of how he found the captain's treasure.

"It's all right, Si," said the captain, at the end of it, "and you are going to school with me. You are just the kind of boy to make a captain of."

"Going to school?" stammered Si.

"One or two voyages in the 'Wanderer,'" said the captain. "Then a thorough schooling on shore. This country is going to run short of sea-captains, if we go ahead building steamships as I believe we're going to. It's a big thing to be skipper of an Atlantic liner. What do you think, Si?"

Si may have thought, but he could not speak, and it was Mrs. Vrooman who helped him out with:

"Go home and see your mother, Si—Tom, you go,

too, but come here to-morrow. The captain 'll tell you more then. You can have as much schooling as Si will."

"Si," whispered Katie, "you are to be on the ship when we go to Europe. We can go everywhere, now, and see everything. You can't guess how I feel!"

Away went the boys. Tom went down the hill whistling, and did not seem to be very much upset, but Si and Tiger walked across the road as if neither of them quite understood the situation.

In fact, Si hardly felt sure that he was awake until he stood in the sitting-room of his own house, trying to tell his father and mother about the "Madagascar." They listened and they asked questions, and Si felt as if he were sailing steadily into calmer water, but his eyes had wandered around the room in search of a faint ticking sound that he had heard.

"Hullo!" he said. "Squire Lander brought it back. It's going. Why, mother, isn't it but twelve o'clock? How that boat did run! Oh!"

A little door in the upper part of the clock that the inventor had mended flew open at that moment. Out fluttered something like a bird.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" it said, but a voice behind Si added:

"Hold on, now! I came to be here at noon and see how it would work. I set it. Wait."

Bang! Sharp enough was the report of the little brass cannon that ran out with the cuckoo. "Woof!" roared Tiger, as he dashed out of the house, and Squire Lander exclaimed triumphantly:

"I knew it would work! Now, Mr. Moore, I'll take care of Si on the ship. You must let him go. We are all going."

"Squire," said Mr. Moore, "I have considered that matter. It's the luckiest thing for him, if he works hard enough, and I know he will. What do you say, Si? Do you want to go?"

Si looked at his mother affectionately, but half anxiously.

"Ought I to go, mother?" he said. "Can you spare me?"

A very earnest look of a very loving kind was deepening upon her face, and, after a breath or so of pause, he said again:

"May I go, mother? May I go and learn to be a sea-captain?"

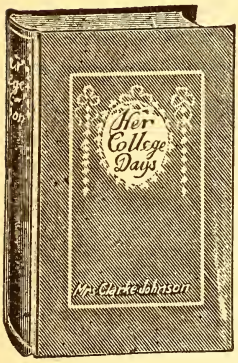
"Si!" she exclaimed. "My boy! There's no help for it! I'm afraid you'll have to go and be one. Go!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Si. "Then I'll go! I do thank you, mother! I'll go and be a sea-captain!"

THE END.

Best Books

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS



A SERIES of books for young people that contains the latest and best works of the most popular writers for boys and girls. The stories are not only told in an interesting and charming manner, but most of them contain something in the way of information or instruction, and all are of a good moral tone. For this reason they prove doubly good reading; for, while the child is pleasantly employing his time, he is also improving his mind and developing his character. Nowhere can better books be found to put into the hands of young people. They are profusely and handsomely illustrated by the best artists and are well printed on good paper with exceedingly handsome and durable bindings.

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STORIES FOR GIRLS

The Ferry Maid of the Chattahoochee

By Annie M. Barnes *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

An heroic little Georgia girl, in her father's extremity, takes charge of his ferry, and through many vicissitudes and several impending calamities, succeeds in carrying out her purpose of supporting her invalid parent and his family. The heroine's cheerfulness and hearty good humor, combined with an unflinching zeal in her determination to accomplish her work, make a character which cannot fail to appeal to young people.

A Maid of the First Century

By Lucy Foster Madison *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

A little maid of Palestine goes in search of her father, who for political reasons, has been taken as a slave to Rome. She is shipwrecked in the Mediterranean, but is rescued by a passing vessel bound for Britain. Eventually an opportunity is afforded her for going to Rome, where, after many trying and exciting experiences, she and her father are united and his liberty is restored to him.

My Lady Barefoot

By Mrs. Evelyn Raymond *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

A beautifully told story of the trials of a little backwoods girl who lives in a secluded place with an eccentric uncle, until his death. The privations she undergoes during his life-time, her search for other relatives, her rather uncongenial abode with them, her return to her early home to acquire her uncle's estate, and thus to enjoy a useful and happy life, form a most interesting narrative of a girl whose ruggedness and simplicity of character must appeal to the admiration of all readers.

Dorothy Day

By Julie M. Lippmann *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

This is a most interesting story of a bright and spirited young girl whose widowed mother re-marries. The impulsive girl chafes under the new relationship, being unwilling to share with another the bounteous love of her mother which she had learned to claim wholly for her own. By the exercise of great tact and kindness, the obdurate Dorothy is at last won over, and becomes a most estimable girl.

Miss Wildfire

By Julie M. Lippmann *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

The story of a governess' attempt to win the love and confidence of her ward, who, owing to a lack of early restraint, is inclined to be somewhat of a hoyden. The development of the girl's character and her eventual victory over her turbulent disposition combine to form a story of unusual merit and one which will hold its reader's eager attention throughout.

"A story of girls for girls that teaches a moral without labeling or tagging it at the end." — *Western Christian Advocate*, Cincinnati, O.

An Odd Little Lass

By Jessie E. Wright *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

This is a story of the regeneration of a little street waif. She begins life in a lowly court of a large city. Her adventures are numerous, and often quite exciting. After a time she is transplanted to the country, where after many thrilling experiences she eventually grows into a useful and lovable young woman. The story is pleasantly told, and abounds in interesting incident.

"The story is an intensely interesting one, and abounds in pleasing and unique situations."—*Religious Telescope*, Dayton, Ohio.

Two Wyoming Girls

By Mrs. Carrie L. Marshall *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

Two girls, thrown upon their own resources, are obliged to "prove up" their homestead claim. This would be no very serious matter were it not for the persecution of an unscrupulous neighbor, who wishes to appropriate the property to his own use. The girls endure many privations, have a number of thrilling adventures, but finally secure their claim and are generally well rewarded for their courage and perseverance.

The Girl Ranchers

By Mrs. Carrie L. Marshall *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

A story of life on a sheep ranch in Montana. The dangers and difficulties incident to such a life are vividly pictured, and the interest in the story is enhanced by the fact that the ranch is managed almost entirely by two young girls. By their energy and pluck, coupled with courage, kindness, and unselfishness they succeed in disarming the animosity of the neighboring cattle ranchers, and their enterprise eventually results successfully.

An Every-Day Heroine

By Mary A. Denison *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

The heroine is not an impossible character but only a pure, winsome, earnest girl, who at fourteen years of age is suddenly bereft of fortune and father and becomes the chief support of a semi-invalid mother. While there are many touching scenes, the story as a whole is bright and cheerful and moves forward with a naturalness and ease that carries its readers along and makes them reluctant to put down the book until the end is reached.

Her College Days

By Mrs. Clarke Johnson *Illustrated by Ida Waugh*

This is a most interesting and healthful tale of a girl's life in a New England college. The trustful and unbounded love of the heroine for her mother and the mutual and self-sacrificing devotion of the mother to the daughter are so beautifully interwoven with the varied occurrences and exciting incidents of college life as to leave a most wholesome impression upon the mind and heart of the reader.

STORIES FOR BOYS

Uncrowning a King

By Edward S. Ellis, A. M. Illustrated by J. Steeple Davis

A tale of the Indian war waged by King Philip in 1675. The adventures of the young hero during that eventful period, his efforts in behalf of the attacked towns, his capture by the Indians, and his subsequent release through the efforts of King Philip himself, with a vivid account of the tragic death of that renowned Indian chieftain, form a most interesting and instructive story of the early days of the colonies.

The Young Gold Seekers

By Edward S. Ellis, A. M. Illustrated by F. A. Carter

A thrilling account of the experiences of two boys during a trip to the gold fields of Alaska. The hardships that they endure, the disappointments they suffer, the courage and perseverance that they manifest in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and their eventual success in their undertaking, are all most graphically portrayed.

True to His Trust

By Edward S. Ellis, A. M. Illustrated by J. Steeple Davis

The hero of this story will win his way at once into the heart of every one, and his pluck and perseverance will carry the sympathy of every reader through his many adventures, struggles, and singular experiences. Like all of the author's works, the incidents teach in the most convincing manner that true manliness and sturdy integrity are the only principles through which happiness and success in life are possible.

Comrades True

By Edward S. Ellis, A. M. *Illustrated*

In following the career of two friends from youth to manhood, the author weaves a narrative of intense interest. This story is more realistic than is usual, as the two heroes pass through the calamitous forest fires in Northern Minnesota and barely escape with their lives. They have other thrilling adventures and experiences in which the characteristics of each are finely portrayed.

"Among juveniles there is not one of greater interest, or more wholesome influence than 'Comrades True.'"—*Sentinel*, Milwaukee, Wis.

Among the Esquimaux

By Edward S. Ellis, A. M. *Illustrated*

The scenes of this story are laid in the Arctic region, the central characters being two sturdy boys whose adventurous spirit often leads them into dangerous positions. They visit Greenland; go on a hunting expedition, have a number of stirring adventures, but ultimately reach home safe and sound.

"A capital and instructive book for boys."—*Post*, Boston, Mass.

The Campers Out

By Edward S. Ellis, A. M. *Illustrated*

Many of the scenes are so vividly described that the reader can, in his imagination, enjoy the excitement of the chase and all the pleasures of a good camping tour. In addition to the vivid descriptions of many exciting adventures, this story teaches a lesson in morals that cannot fail to prove helpful to every reader.

"Well planned and well written. Full of adventure of just the right sort."—*Mid-Continent,* St. Louis, Mo.

At the Siege of Quebec

By James Otis *Illustrated by F. A. Carter*

Two boys living on the Kennebec River join Benedict Arnold's expedition as it passes their dwelling en route for the Canadian border. They, with their command, are taken prisoners before Quebec. The description of the terrible march through the wilderness, the incidents of the siege, and the disastrous assault, which cost the gallant General Montgomery his life, are in the highest degree thrilling, while at the same time true in every particular.

Andy's Ward

By James Otis *Illustrated*

A fascinating narrative of the life and experiences of "Museum Marvels." They dwell in a house owned by a sword-swallower, whose wife, the "Original Circassian," is entrusted with its management. The rest of the household includes a dwarf, nick-named the "Major," a fat lady, a giant, and a snake-charmer. The private life of the marvels forms a story full of incident, and one that possesses that peculiar simplicity of style which has won for this author such a host of readers.

Chasing a Yacht

By James Otis *Illustrated*

A semi-nautical tale of adventure about boys, written for boys, and will certainly be appreciated by boys wherever they may be found. The story of how the heroes, two bright, manly fellows, built a steam yacht, how she was stolen from them, and how they eventually regained possession of her, is full of life and is replete with exciting and interesting incident.

"Boys who do not read this volume with real pleasure must be hard to suit."—*Journal*, Minneapolis, Minn.

The Braganza Diamond

By James Otis *Illustrated*

A volume that will hold its readers spell-bound as they follow the two boy characters and the bright, courageous girl in their search for the famous diamond. Much useful information is incidentally conveyed and many things with which few persons are familiar are explained.

"It will rivet the attention of young readers as much as Robinson Crusoe."—*Call*, San Francisco, Cal.

On Wood Cove Island

By Elbridge S. Brooks *Illustrated by Frederic J. Boston*

A trio of bright New England children are given an island on which to spend their summer vacation. Here they establish a little colony, the management of which gives them a large amount of amusement and at times causes some seemingly serious difficulties. In the solution of their perplexing problems the young people receive much encouragement and counsel from the poet Longfellow, whose delightful acquaintance they form in a very unexpected and amusing manner.

Under the Tamaracks

By Elbridge S. Brooks *Illustrated*

An interesting and healthful story for boys and girls, representing a summer's outing of young people among the Thousand Islands. It is timed to include the visit of General Grant at Alexandria Bay, and several interesting conversations between one of the boys and the hero of the Rebellion shed pleasing side lights upon the great General's character.

"General Grant's talks with the heroes will captivate the heart of every boy."—*Teachers' World*, New York.

In the Days of Washington

By William Murray Graydon *Illustrated by J. C. Claghorn*

The story opens in Philadelphia just prior to its evacuation by the British in 1778. Nathan Stanbury, a bright lad of seventeen, joins the Continental Army which is then suffering the hardships of the winter at Valley Forge. A short time later the Battle of Monmouth is fought, and in this the young hero figures quite prominently, as he does afterward at the Massacre of Wyoming.

The Lost Gold Mine

By Frank H. Converse *Illustrated*

At the opening of this story, the hero, by a singular circumstance, finds himself in possession of certain papers relating to a gold mine in the far West, and he and his chum conclude to make a search for it. Their untiring efforts are eventually crowned with success, but not until the party has suffered many privations and escaped numerous impending dangers such as characterized the early days of the gold fever.

A Moonshiner's Son

By Will Allen Dromgoole *Illustrated by F. A. Carter*

The scene of this dramatic story is laid in the mountains of Tennessee amid the haunts of the illicit distillers. The hero is made to suffer many hardships as a result of his father's unlawful business, but after the latter's tragic death, the boy is afforded an opportunity of going to a large city, where his sterling merit soon brings him into prominence. The story is full of the most thrilling incidents, and the tone is wholesome and elevating.

The Moncasket Mystery

By Sidney Marlow *Illustrated*

Wise indeed is that teacher or parent who provides his children with such healthful and entertaining reading as this book will prove to be. It is a pleasing story, full of base-ball and fishing experiences, with just sufficient "mystery" to add zest to the tale. The principal character is not called upon to perform any impossible feats, but he exemplifies his character in the pursuits of daily life and always proves faithful to the confidence reposed in him.

Harry Ambler

By Sidney Marlow *Illustrated*

A charming story of a bright boy, that is full of exciting incidents and is told in a pleasing style. It is interesting without being sensational, and incidentally shows that courage and honesty are the sure roads to success. The characteristics displayed by the hero can be emulated with profit by boys generally. The book points out a moral without making that the "reason of being" of the story.

The Young Boatman

By Horatio Alger, Jr. *Illustrated*

A story of a manly boy, whose fine character is brought in contact with a coarse and cruel one, in the person of his stepfather. Perseverance and honesty will always win, as is shown in this charming story. A young boy, by pluck and energy, overcomes difficulties that would have baffled many an older head.

"Grit, the hero, is worthy of his name, and every boy will sympathize with him in his troubles and rejoice with him in his triumphs."—*Times*, Philadelphia.

The Odds Against Him

By Horatio Alger, Jr. *Illustrated*

The book is full of bright, cheerful, and amusing incident, showing that a boy of good, honest, sterling, industrious habits can always secure friends and succeed in earning an honest living, and in spite of formidable obstacles can obtain a position of comfort and respectability. The hero is full of resolution and pluck, and by diligence and faithfulness he rapidly advances, in spite of the "odds," to success.

CLASSIC STORIES

The Story of the Iliad

By Dr. Edward Brooks, A. M. *Illustrated*

Homer's Iliad is said to be the world's greatest poem. The chief episodes of the tale of Helen and the dire results of her misdoing are here told in words admirable for their simplicity and directness. The wonderful inventive skill, the beauty and variety of imagery, and the simplicity of style displayed by Homer are graphically exhibited in this book.

The Story of the Odyssey

By Dr. Edward Brooks, A. M. *Illustrated*

The wanderings of Ulysses are here told in a charmingly simple and concise style, making a book full of interest, and the boy or girl who begins the story will read it through. It is not merely attractive and absorbing, it is as well one of the most instructive books that literature affords. In fact, he who has become familiar with the adventures here narrated has an outlook upon the art, poetry, and romance of the world.

The Story of the Aeneid

By Dr. Edward Brooks, A. M. *Illustrated*

Virgil's classic poem was probably never before rendered into such choice but simple English as is found in this volume. The story of the erratic journeyings of Æneas and his companions, while somewhat abbreviated, is connected, and flows smoothly along with much of the spirit that characterizes the original. No boy or girl who reads this story will fail to have an increased admiration for classical literature.

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